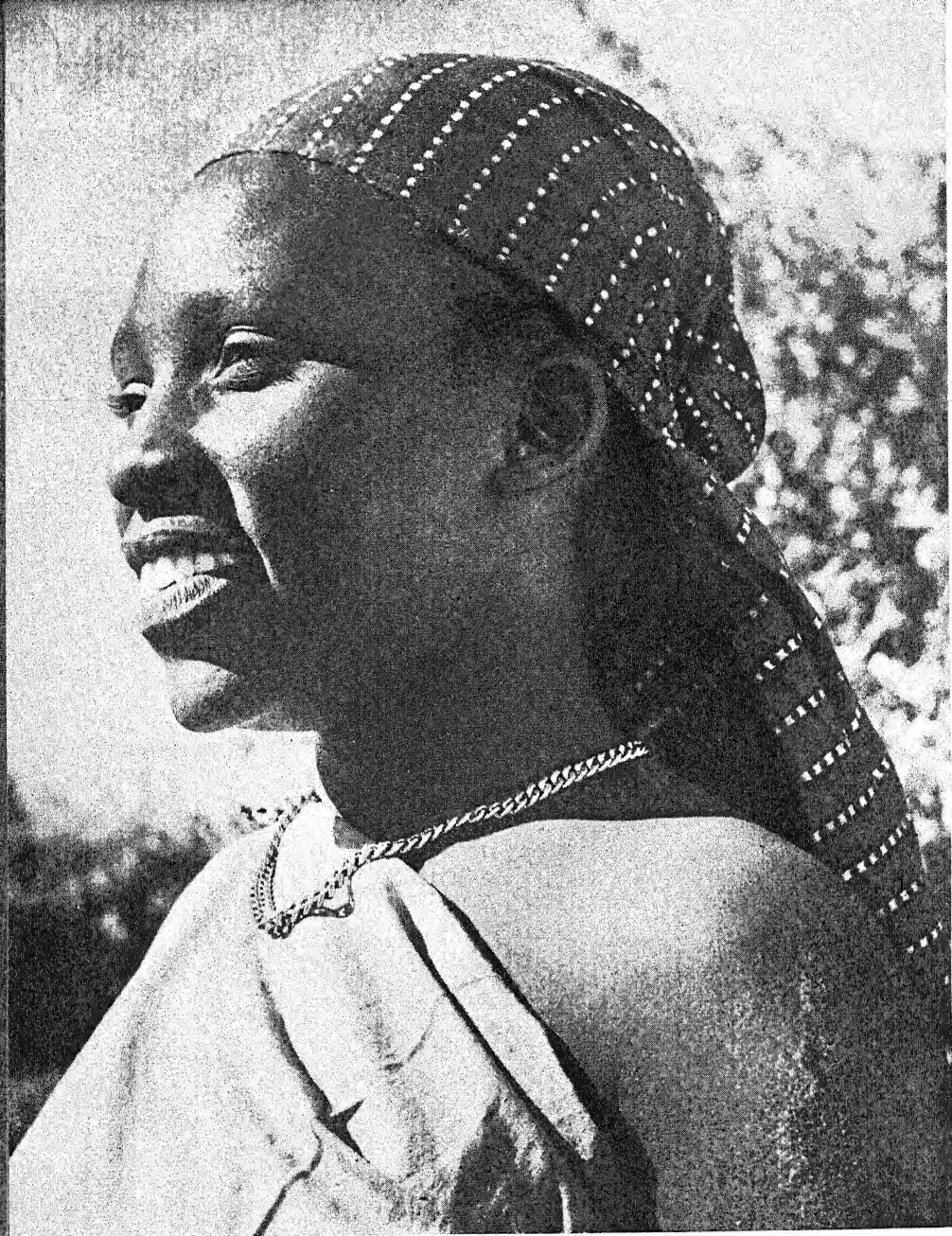


*The
Light
Continent*



The Light Continent

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In memoriam
the victims of Sharpeville and Lunda
I dedicate this
book
to
MIE

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Introduction

SPARKLING lights on an expanse of yellow plains and transparently blue hills under a sky of extraordinary clarity, even where it is dotted with silvery clouds. This was my first impression on arrival in the "Dark Continent". Since that day, this impression has stayed with me and made me wonder at the irony of words and things. It was the British of all people, coming from Europe's most gloomy climate, who called this dazzling land "dark"—the "Dark Continent". And the name stuck.

It stuck and was perpetuated by every European newspaper writer interested in the discoveries between Zanzibar and Lake Victoria or the Congo and Niger—discoveries which were of importance during the reign of Queen Victoria.

Sparkling lights and the "Dark Continent" !

A mere coincidence, or more?

Is there a hidden compass which directs us towards words and nicknames to fit in with what we wish to see, rather than towards what we actually see?

To be sure, there are dark, tropical rain forests in Africa: in the Congo Basin, along the Niger or the Zambesi, in Uganda and around Kilimanjaro; in Ethiopia too, the sky is black with rain clouds for about half the year and in South African hills the climate can be dull, bleak and cold. But it was not this that led to the concept of the "Dark Continent". It was the implied association of thought. To the average European of the 19th century, this dazzling continent became the "Dark Continent" for no better reason than the skin colour of the African people—though in certain parts of Africa it is lighter than that of many South Indians. Added to this were the unknown rituals and ideas, strange customs and costumes; these were essentially "dark" because they were unfamiliar.

To many persons, the life of the Africans seemed void of all culture because they had taken neither to reading and writing, nor to the use of the wheeled cart, despite age-old contacts with Egypt, Persia and Arabia. Their clothes were made of bark and hide, and they wore strange strings of colourful beads or metal ornaments. So they were "savages", "pagans" without civilization. Because

they had few towns and no drawn maps (though they did use an acoustic method of drum telegraphy and elaborated diverse systems of social and political organization !) and because their planning did not conform to familiar patterns, therefore they were the "dark" races waiting to be "enlightened".

Out of this fundamental mis-representation a type of stereotyped myth about darkness grew in relation to everything African, particularly the African peoples. It became all the more popular in Europe because it flattered the author-explorer as much as the reader at home. One likes to see oneself or one's race, described as the bringer of light, of culture and of better things to those poor, wretched "heathens", groping in darkness, being dark themselves !

But there is yet another side to the picture.

It has not always been the cream of European society, much less the leaders of Western intelligentsia or spiritual life, who went overseas to Africa. Those who did go to strange lands, whatever their aims and qualifications might have been, often felt an understandable desire to send back home a picture which made them, the painters of the picture, look heroic and grand. They were, then, fearless torch-bearers from that peak which well-dressed Victorian middle-class respectability had reached on the road to civilization at home. They were never afraid of naked cannibals or treacherous "pagans", for they were emissaries and missionaries of "civilization", by virtue of their profuse clothing, white skin and firearms, capital and the Bible.

Thus in uncounted newspaper reports, travelogues and novels a routine picture of the "lazy blacks" grew. It showed them as fearful, bloodthirsty fiends, and at the same time, as cringing worshippers of the white demi-god, taken in by every triumph or trick of civilization, from lighted matchsticks to the offer of a length of cloth for a slave, or, more recently from loudspeakers and television to atomic explosions.

Based on half-truths, a set of obviously distorted standard patterns, in the description of the dark continent, developed. The Kiswahili word *bwana*, for instance, was conveniently translated to mean White Lord with capital W and L though it actually, means — *man*. It is used among Africans themselves with that connotation and towards foreigners with a meaning approximating to *sir*. But at home, in Europe, it sounds romantic to know that

every Tom, Dick and Harry is being addressed as *White Lord*, simply because he belongs to the race of the superhuman White. The interpretation of *bwana* repeated that of *sahib* in India, an Arabic word for companion which was at one time used by the Moghul rulers among themselves. Later *sahib* also came to mean "White Lord", at least in the ears of European travellers.

A type of literature on Africa thus grew up which was based on the simple but effective device of increasing one's own greatness and enhancing one's own imperturbable superiority by magnifying the fearfulness of one's enemies or dwelling on their abject submissiveness alternately.

The picture of the people of the Dark Continent, drawn on these lines, and the imagined relationship between naked savages and well-dressed supermen, was not much nearer to the facts than the word "dark" applied to Africa's scenery. Yet the epithet was, and still is, widely used by newspapermen. We cannot dismiss it as a thing of the past, though meanwhile two world wars, two major revolutions in Europe and Asia, mechanization especially of transport, and a lot of other things have changed the relations between ideas and races. Asia is politically independent. Africa follows fast suit. But the Dark Continent concept continues to exist in the minds of most people who have something to do with, or to write about, Africa.

Is there no fire at all to create so much smoke?

Words and thoughts also are realities; not only *pangas* and bullets.

The picture of the crouching or cannibalistic savage who either worships or eats the White superman may not have been always realistic or just. But, on the other hand, too flattering a picture would not fit either. The average African qualifies neither as a saint, nor as a particularly original thinker; neither as a person of outstanding character strength, nor as one of extraordinary aesthetic refinement. He is about as much of a snob, prestige hunter and money-grabbing world citizen as you and I and any other chap whom we are likely to meet everyday.

There is, however, one thing which we must not forget: the present generation of Africans has been brought up on European school books, newspapers and radio talks. This generation has imbibed the story of the Dark Continent more thoroughly than the average

European who read the word occasionally in a travel book. Yet this young African generation has to build up political independence now. This generation is dressed in more conventionally European clothes than the Europeans in Africa themselves, and it cannot do without cigarettes, beer bottles and radio broadcasts.

A dark situation?

Perhaps. However, apart from the proverbial silver lining to even the darkest cloud, there are also a lot of other implications to be weighed, if we want to see Africa free from either old nicknames or new slogans. Africa is a land of light and shade; of sparkling clarity and also of enigmatic obscurity.

To see both is to understand.

This book shows one way towards understanding.

It is the way of observation in one tiny part of this great continent; more specifically, anthropological observation. There are many other parts of the vast area and many other ways to approach them: the ways of psychology, the arts, for instance, and there is religion. Each of these leads perhaps deeper and more directly into the core of human emotions and motivations. Anthropology, however, as a co-ordinated study of *all* these aspects in human cultures, includes also these other, more direct ways.

The following chapters were not written as a professional anthropological treatise but they try to take the non-anthropologist on an anthropologist's trip through East Africa, to show how interests get concentrated, how they take the observer into their own circles and finally may lead to wider vistas and more comprehensive views.

Among non-anthropologists the opinion is still widespread that this science is exclusively concerned with either skull measurements and blood groups, or else with the queer habits of some insignificantly small tribes on the verge of extinction. Though the scope of anthropology has never been as narrow as that, it has grown in recent years to include all culture change. It is a study of man, wherever or in whichever part of this planet his habitat may be. Moreover there is also Applied Anthropology.

This is the practical application of our science to the conditions of a fast changing world in which the special relations of each people to every other culture forms yet another object of study. Applied

Anthropology is a growing branch on the young but strong stem of the mother tree.

Each specific anthropological interest leads thus to two vital questions of our time.

First: how to adjust ourselves to a rapidly changing world and,

Second: how to react to the specific adjustments which have been made by others.

Finally, I well realize, that every writer is subject to his own individuality, his particular likes and dislikes, preferences and prejudices. I do not know to what extent I have escaped from this, though I have tried to be impartially selective and objective. If here and there I have over-stressed any particular aspect of African life, or insufficiently stressed certain other aspects, I can only say that these are inescapable limitations to which all writers and researchers are subject, however much they strive to achieve total objectivity.

I know that at places I have had occasion to criticise the people of Africa, my host country ; the people of Asia, one part of which, India is my adopted motherland ; and the people of the West who came from my own native continent, Europe. But where I did so, it was not with the intention of widening the existing gulf between them — rather in the hope to build bridges of understanding and of forgiveness.

The starting interest in the work on which this book reports was the study of matrilineal social systems and the changing position of women in modern Africa.

Whilst one goes along any path, the horizons keep on changing and sometimes unexpected views may open up.

The author of this narration about a year's studies hopes that it will not prove an exception to that rule.

U. R. E

Aberglen, Kotagiri

3 May 1960

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I already had some previous experience of field work among matrilineal peoples in Assam and Kerala where my researches had been partly supported by the Viking Fund (1949), which was later renamed The Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc., New York (1952).

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My debt of gratitude is perhaps greatest towards those of my African friends who came with me to my camp in, or near, villages and helped me as interpreters and companions in a none too luxuriously conducted kind of anthropological field work — and to all those who responded in their, and my own, long-drawn-out conversations, for I had acquired at least a bit of Kiswahili working knowledge, enough to ask a few questions and understand something of the conversations going on around me. Some of these friends are described and a few actually named in the pages of the here following chapters. My gratitude to those who, for reasons of space, are not mentioned here, is not less.

That in the omission of one, as well as in the description of another, the inevitable process of selection carries with it an element of composition, if not fiction, must here be stressed, for, though I tried to be as truthful and accurate as I could in describing my experiences during anthropological field work, this is yet a narrative of how anthropological data have been collected — not their analysis. Where I have failed (and I am bound to have failed at many places) I can but ask pardon from those whom I may have connected with the element of half-truth which is inescapably intertwined with all narration.

If I am grateful to many people who have helped me during actual field work in Africa, this is not less true to say of the writing down of this book after my return to India.

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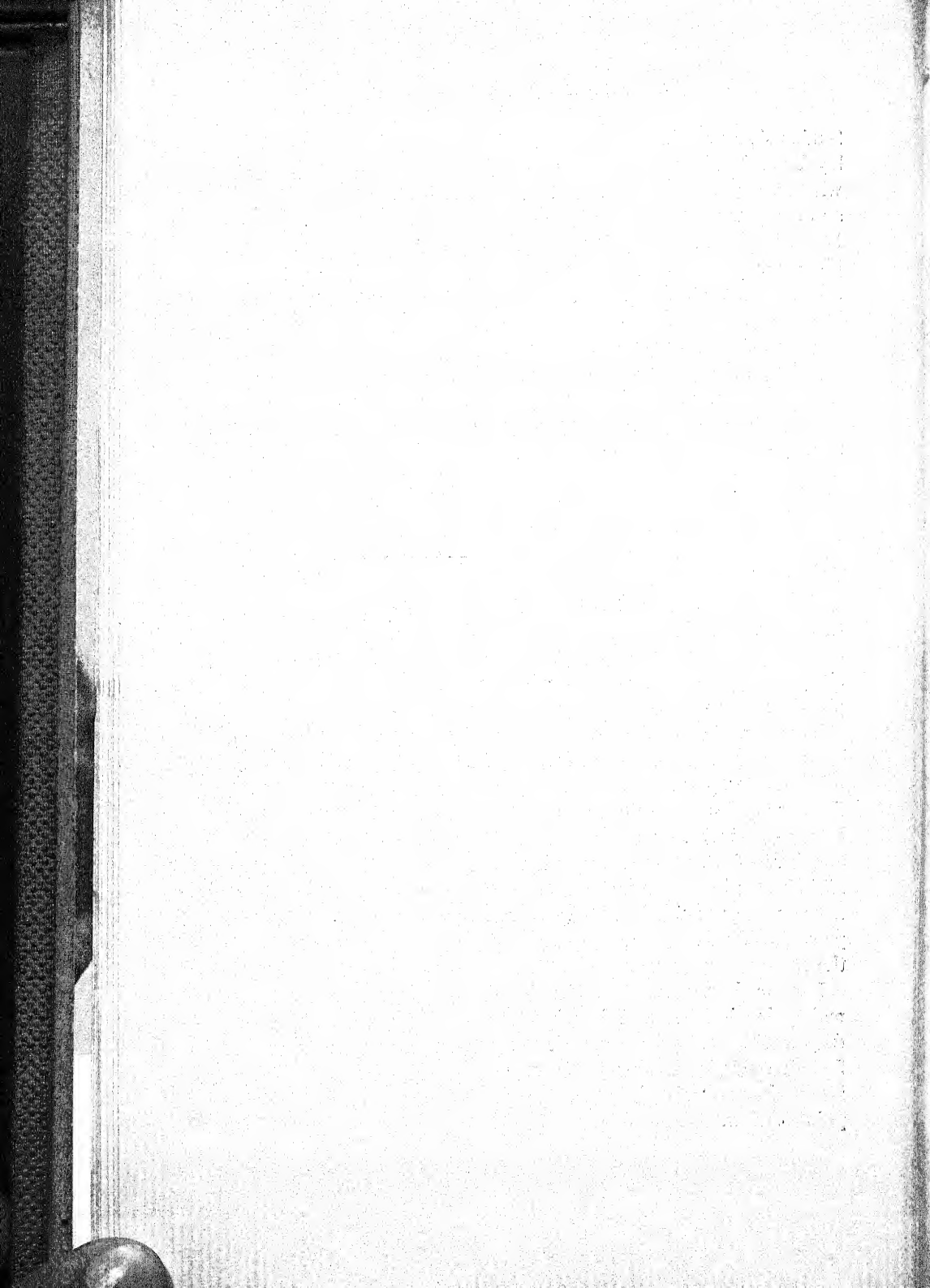
To the one, however, to whom I owe most for help in the composition, writing and proof reading of this book and for rendering help, assistance and criticism in a generosity and selflessness of unparalleled measure, I am bound to express my deep gratitude anonymously.

Note on Spelling

THE transliteration of words from languages, written only during the last two or three generations in either Arabic or Roman script offers ample opportunity to commit errors and mistakes — especially to a person who, like the author of this book, is neither a philologist, nor an Africanist or expert in phonetics.

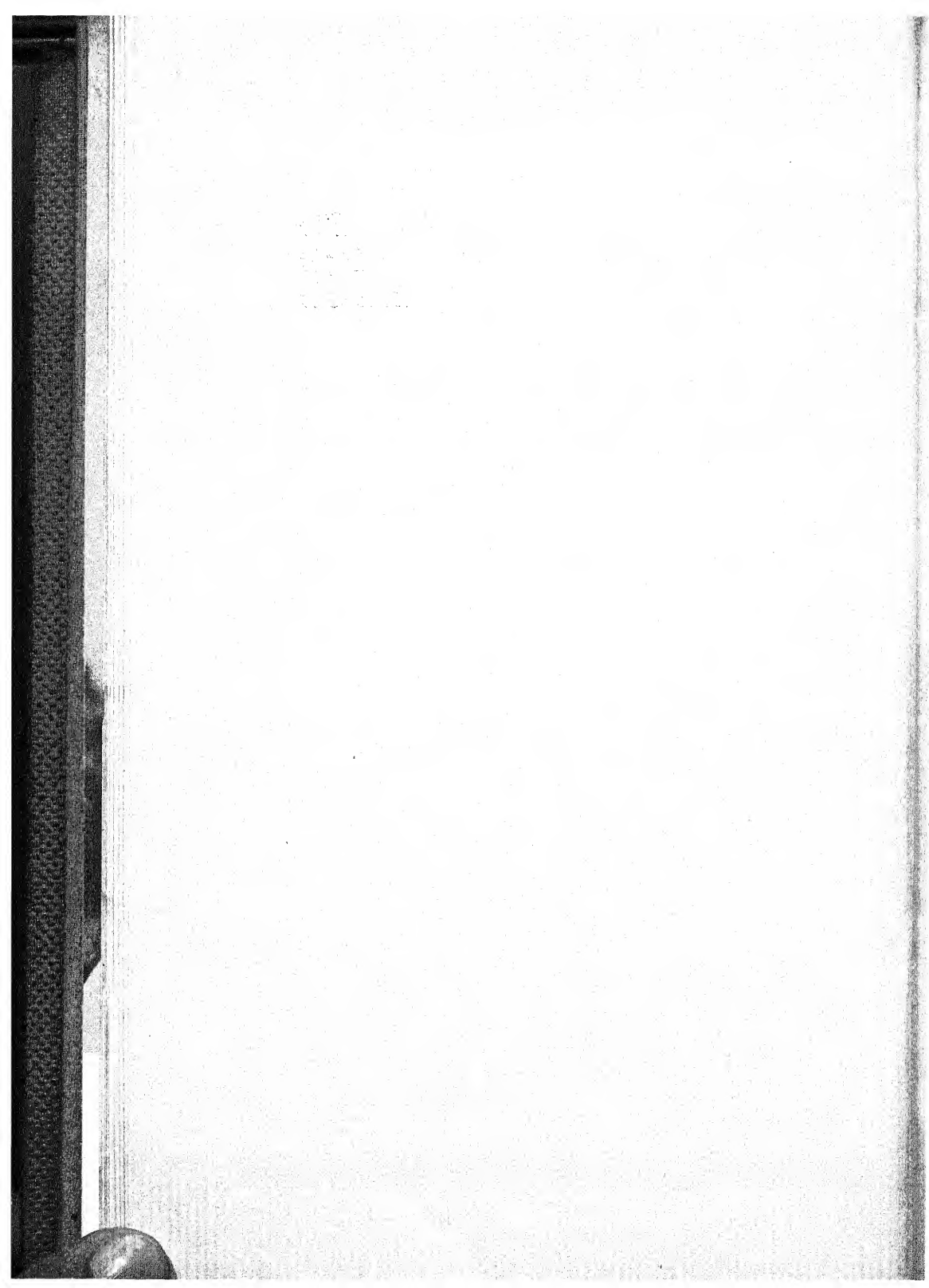
However, the attempt was made to follow the usual spelling in ordinary English — not in scientific Africanistic — writings. African tribal names are generally used without prefixes as adjectives or as abstract nouns, *e.g.*, *Makonde tradition* or *Makonde-like* but pre-fixed with *Mu* to indicate one single, or with *Wa* for several members of the tribe, or nation concerned whilst the prefix *Ki* indicates in this context the language spoken by the particular tribe or other group. Mu-Makonde, for instance is “one Makonde person”, Wa-Makonde, “several Makondes”, and Ki-Makonde, the Makonde language.

I wrote down personal and clan names in my notebooks kept mainly in English, as I imagined that in contemporary English they would most likely be spelt — even though I am aware of the fact that this is not always the correct way of writing, from the international Africanistic, nor from the orthographic English point of view,



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1. *Ivory and Slaves*

THE Giriyama tribe and their picturesque national costume was one of the first things I heard about, after landing in Mombasa, on the Kenya coast, in October 1957. The Giriyama dress for women consists of a grass-skirt type of clothing which spreads in ballet fashion from waist to knee and leaves the upper body free. Neat strings of red, white and dark blue beads are tightly fitted on upper arms, neck, ankles and wrists. The amazing part of the Giriyama dress story is its survival until the last few years and, in rural parts, even until to-day, when now practically all other East African tribes have, with very few exceptions, adopted a mixture of Arab and European clothing fashions. Most of these rare exceptions live far away on the borders of Ethiopia, in the Sudan or some still in the interior of Tanganyika. On the Arabian Sea coast, close to the main port Mombasa, there are only the Wa-Giriyama in spite, or because of, the fact that they had probably been one of the first East African tribes to come into close contact with foreign influence. The Kenya coast has been exposed to outsiders, ever since Arabs began to settle there, more than a thousand years ago, in eighth century A.D. Later followed the Portuguese adventurers, more than four centuries before our time, then the British in Kenya and the Germans in Tanganyika. This was in the eighteen-eighties. These varied and long-standing contacts, instead of overwhelming, seem to have immunised the Giriyama and related tribes against the virus of foreign civilizations. This was so until the quite recent past, when even their cultural resistance appears to have collapsed.

Another factor contributing to the comparative integrity of the coastal tribes was the concentration of slave-raiding on distant areas in the richer interior, rather than on the Giriyama or any other of the "Nine Tribes" along the coast.

Hearing about these people, I pricked my ears. I knew them well from literature. There are not too many matrilineal groups in East Africa and the Giriyama are one of them.

Less than twenty miles inland, parallel to the coast, runs a terrace

of low hills, from Mombasa to Malindi, the old Arab port in the north which is now a holiday and bathing resort just a little over three degrees south of the equator. In the dry scrub bush of the escarpment, the Wa-Giryama live the hard life of shifting cultivators as one of the "Nine Tribes" which were previously known as *Nyika*. This is not a very flattering Kiswahili term for a desert or for people living in deserts. It almost means a barbarian, like the word *bedu* in pure Arabic. The tribal people never used this term as self-description and now resent being referred to by others with it. They prefer the name *Mizi Chenda* or *Miji Kenda*, which literally means nine places or tribes and is now officially recognised as the name of this Bantu speaking group.

Their traditional history points to a common home in the north, perhaps outside the present border of Kenya, on the other side of the equator from where their ancestors might once have been driven by Nilo-Hamitic speaking cattle people. These non-Bantu, but physically no doubt Negroid, races of herdsmen and warriors played a decisive role in the history of East Africa. The Galla from Somalia and south-eastern Ethiopia, for instance, seem to have been responsible for the *Mizi Chenda* migration to the coast of Kenya. Two among the Nine Tribes, the Wa-Nduruma and the Wa-Digo, still stick to their traditional form of social organization. Their clan succession is matrilineal and their residence pattern is, on principle, matrilocal. The clan name, comparable to the Western family name, passes from mothers to children, and husbands settle preferably near the homes or on the clan lands of their wives. Property too moves mostly in the matrilineal order, though this means now-a-days not much more than marriage payment for a bride by the groom's family to the girl's maternal uncle instead of the father. Moreover, the young couple will generally look for help to the wife's people. Inheritable property as such is scarcely important enough to favour detailed inheritance laws. However, some members of the matrilineal Nduruma and Digo tribes proposed, at the African Council Kwale in 1957, to legislate a switch-over from matrilineal to patrilineal inheritance and succession laws for their people. One year afterwards the case was still pending. There was little ado about that. Neither mother-right among Wa-Nduruma and Wa-Digo, nor the trim Giryama national dress (Fig. 1, opp.) seemed to be important any more in the life rhythm of Mombasa and in

the minds of the people I had occasion to see or opportunity to observe.

It was another set of symbols that attracted the attention and recalled a different tradition.

On the way to my hotel, I passed through Kilindini Road, the main thoroughfare, under a triumphal arch which had been erected for Princess Margaret's visit. This arch consisted of two giant elephant tusks, models made of ivory-coloured metal. They looked amazingly real, though they out-measured a good deal the longest elephant tusks ever found in Africa. The biggest tooth is in the British Museum in London and was bought for £ 350 half a century ago. It measures 10 feet $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, $24\frac{1}{2}$ inches in girth, and weighs $226\frac{1}{2}$ lbs (Hill, 1957: 29).

Under the curves of the models passed heavy traffic: town buses, overland lorries and a glittering chain of British and American luxury cars. Ivory trade. Undeniable, powerful symbol of European interest in Africa !

My first walk led me from the hotel to the old Arab port, then to the Portuguese "Fort Jesus." I crossed the big Nyali bridge over the creek and finally reached Frere Town. This was originally a settlement for freed slaves, founded by missionaries on what was seventy years ago still a rural part outside Mombasa proper. Slaves had mostly been taken from distant tribes such as the Wa-Yao, Wa-Makonde, Wa-Makua and Wa-Mwera in Southern Tanganyika. Others came from Portuguese East Africa and Nyasaland,

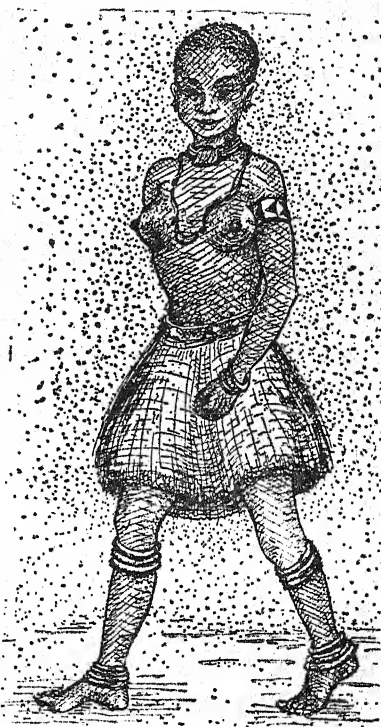


Fig. 1
GIRYAMA TRADITIONAL DRESS
The skirt is made of cloth strips

even from Ruanda-Urundi and the Belgian Congo. The descendants of freed slaves still live in Frere Town, but continue to be outsiders. They are almost foreigners in Mombasa, even though members of the powerful Christian Mission and even though they speak modern coast Kiswahili, as it is taught in the Government-aided mission schools. They live on African soil a life reminiscent of Puerto Rican or Jamaican immigrants in New York or London—a reminder to others and to themselves that it takes usually a little more than the stroke of a pen to reconvert slaves into free peoples, no matter how powerful that pen might be.

Slavery seems to have imprinted its marks on the face of Mombasa more persistently, if less pleasantly, than the fast vanishing features of Mizi Chenda matrilineal social organization and Giriyama national dress.

Ivory and slave-trade. What a pair of human experience! Like twins...

There is something luringly intriguing and, at the same time, sinister about this pair in East Africa. Are they the kind of twins which tribal tradition would have killed? From where did they come and what have they done to the country? Like an epidemic outbreak, seemingly unmotivated, slavery sprang up late on the East African coast. It spread suddenly, violently. What gave it its fierce form in the late 18th and during the 19th century?

It is a story quite different from its parallel on the Atlantic west coast of Africa. There, opposite the American continent, slavery developed as an easily explainable, if less easily excusable, European answer to the demand for cheap labour on the growing plantations in the tropical regions of the Americas. Native American Indians had been found unsuitable, being either too proud, or too little resistant biologically, to put up with the kind of de-culturation which enforced labour implies. Shipload after shipload of West-African slaves went therefore to the Americas, either from Angola with the blessings of Portuguese bishops (Egerton, 1957:60, 62), or, without any blessings, from other parts of the African west coast where European powers of a more puritanical protestant tradition had established their foot-holds. A mass migration was thus initiated on such a large scale that the descendants of West-Africans in the New World now number tens of millions. Apart from the Arabian Sea islands, there is no parallel to this figure of African-descended

people in any of the Asian countries which have been the principal recipients of the East African slave export during the 18th and 19th centuries. The impact of Negroid biological features, however, is now palpable in Arabia and this especially among those classes which could afford the purchase of domestic slaves from overseas.

No doubt, the history of the slave trade on the east coast of Africa is less easily explainable in economic terms than its counterpart on the African west coast. There was no demand for cheap plantation labour anywhere in the countries ruled by either Arabs, Turks or British which could be compared to the demand of the White settlers in the Americas. The actual capture and trading of slaves on the East African coast was predominantly Arab, not European. But then again another paradox: slaving was not an old-established tradition among Arabs. Arabs had been settled there for over a thousand years without showing much interest in slaving, when it suddenly took on, during the first half of the 19th century, such proportions that Livingstone felt called upon to organize his expeditions and anti-slavery campaigns. The system of slave acquisition adopted by Arabs seems to have been an innovation which was conditioned by the possession of fire-arms, previously available in scant quantities only. Villages were at night surrounded, set on fire; the inmates terrorized. The warriors were shot down, the rest captured and then brought over vast distances to the sea shores. The slaves were then marketed in fortified bazaars, from where they had no chance of running away. An old Baluchi corporal who had taken part in the 1914-18 war on the British side, told me that he still remembered slave markets under the German Government of Tanganyika and shortly after the beginning of British administration there. The prices paid by Arab buyers for women were often correlated to the shape and the condition of their breasts, he said. The Arabs no doubt purchased slaves, generally for domestic purposes, already before the 18th century though in numbers which seem quite insignificant compared with the proportions of the 18th and 19th century traffic.

An explanation for the sudden and almost explosive growth of Arab slave trade at that time would also solve the question why Arab slaving did start and stay in Africa.

The Arabs had traded and settled early on the western shores of South India and Ceylon. Already before Muhammed during the

6th and 7th centuries A.D., Arab traders and travellers visited Kerala and the island of Lanka. As the result of intermarriage between newcomers and local girls, a number of Muslim communities grew up : the Malayalam speaking and partly matrilineal Mapillas in Kerala, the Singhalese, or Tamil speaking Moors in Ceylon and the Laccadive-Mal'dive islanders who evolved a *patois* comprising languages of three completely different linguistic families, the Dravidian Malayalam and Tamil, the Indo-European Singhalese and the Semitic Arabic. Arabs from Oman, Masqat and Hadramouth who had been prominent in East Africa for the last eleven hundred years, continue to this day regular trade with the west coast of India, on their *dhow*s, their traditional sailing boats.

Yet Arabs do not seem ever to have purchased slaves on the Asiatic side of the Arabian Sea, in India and Ceylon, although caste system, untouchability, agricultural serfdom and actual slavery in these countries would have offered an easier way to acquire slaves at least in pre-British days than the uncertain and risky method of raiding villages far away from the coast in the interior of Africa as necessitated by conditions there.

Could it then have been something in the physical or mental nature of the African peoples themselves, which provoked or at least suggested their enslavement by others ?

This question grew in my mind every time I saw a new African face at Mombasa. One may expect to see nothing but African faces in this port which is the biggest of Kenya and one of the two most important harbours in all East Africa, the other being Dar-es-Salaam in Tanganyika. (Map I, p. 8) But this is not so. In the shopping centre around Kilindini Road there are only a few Africans around during morning and late afternoon hours. Europeans and Asians hold the field. Only after sunset, when the two communities of foreigners go to their clubs and homes, the Africans predominate. But even they come mostly from distant lands, not from the local Kenya coast. The room boy in my hotel was a Mu-Bemba from Nyasaland, the steward a Luo from Upper Kenya, the sales girl in the shoe shop spoke English better than Kiswahili because she came from Uganda, up-country and beyond Lake Victoria where Kiswahili as *lingua franca* is not popular on account of its association with Arabic and the slave trade in Uganda where Arabs had not appeared prior to their slaving adventures. The nurse in charge

of my friends' children in a home where I was a guest came from Bukoba, almost on the border of Belgian administered Ruanda-Urundi. One clerk in an office was a Somali, another an Arab from Zanzibar who looked more African than the Somali, and the third one was a Congolese who spoke French more easily than English. Mombasa Africans are a mixed crowd from all over the area where Arab slave trade spread. Was there any indication, or at least any unconsciously followed behaviour pattern, common to all these people, which could have been interpreted as a predisposition for falling victims to slavery?

Some physical features they no doubt have in common which mark them off from South Asians of a comparable social and nutritional level. Apart from woolly hair and, on the whole, stronger pigmentation, they also have a greater bodily strength, broader shoulders, longer legs, a heftier muscle development and perhaps a lesser inclination to obesity. But all this would hardly make things easier to explain. Bodily strength might have added attraction to the potential slave buyers, but also made bodily subjection more difficult—scarcely a satisfactory argument to motivate Arab preference for slave raiding in Africa instead of slave buying in India and Ceylon.

The sex aspect was undoubtedly present and even strong in the whole sordid business. It has been argued that the higher prices offered for attractive female slaves started an acute shortage of marriageable women among the remaining free people. This shortage, it is claimed, in turn started off the trend to an ever soaring bride-price which is now such a characteristic and almost universal feature in Africa south of the Sahara (Jackson, 1956 : 17).

But again: why the concentration of just *African* slave women when Arabs had an easier access to other sources of supply in South Asia?

The question travelled with me through the "White Highlands" of Kenya (the European settlers' area where the Mau Mau rebellion had just been suppressed) to Makerere University College in Kampala, at the end of the railway line which the British built in 1901 between Mombasa and Uganda. Whilst the journey was previously an affair of several weeks on foot *safari* with a caravan

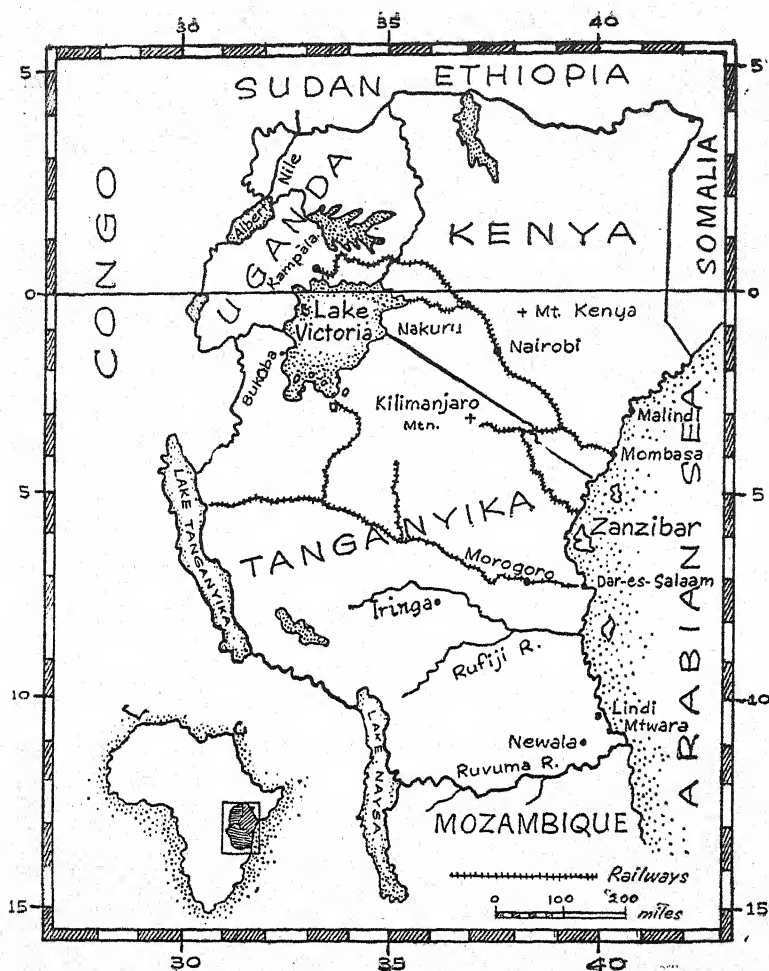


Fig 2, Map I.

SKETCH MAP OF EAST AFRICA

Showing places and neighbouring countries mentioned in text.

Kampala at the end of the railway line from Mombasa through Kenya to the northern shores of Lake Victoria, though not the official capital of Uganda, is the seat of the Kabaka and the famous Makerere College (ch. I and II). Nakuru lies in the White Highlands. Newala, in the south-eastern corner of Tanganyika, opposite Mozambique (Portuguese East Africa), is the district headquarters for the Makonde Plateau (ch. IV and V). Lindi further north on the coast, is the headquarters for the WaMwera (ch. VI). Morogoro still further north is the district town for the Uluguru Mountains (ch. VII) and Bukoba lies on the western shores of Lake Victoria, itself without railway links to the coast towns (ch. IX).

of porters, it takes now one day and two nights by train and only a few hours by plane (Map 1, opp.).

Makerere College is the East African Oxford, with a majority of African and Arab students, a strong minority of Asians and a few Europeans. The director of the Institute of Social Research, Professor Aidan Southall, took me to the Uganda Club for lunch, the day I arrived. The club is a neat, spacious building under a red-tiled roof in the midst of trees which throw deep shadows on silvery gravel between luxuriant flower beds. It commands a magnificent view over the irregularly growing town. In easy and pleasant surroundings the three major communities, African, Asian and European, meet here. In East Africa, *Asian* practically means Indian or Pakistani, and *European* is still more or less an equivalent for British though it may sometimes refer to White Americans. I sensed among the Africans the proximity and traditions of the Kabaka's, the king's court. The atmosphere reminded me a bit of the old Native States in British India. Club members of different races showed respect one for the other, without submissiveness or servility; perhaps even less so than in comparable situations in India before independence. The polite African society ladies in tailored European frocks or silk gowns and the somewhat ponderous gentlemen in dark blue or grey suits certainly did not suggest any inborn propensities for being made slaves. The mere thought of it would make anybody laugh. Still I kept thinking of slaves, of ivory, of the twins in Mombasa.

"Slave trade and ivory trade grew together in East Africa," was the first comment which my host made in reply to my thinking aloud. With interest I listened to his elaboration of the co-function between the two institutions.

Ivory is both heavy and bulky. It had to be brought over enormous distances from the rich hunting grounds up-country in the interior to ports on the coast for trans-shipment to Europe from where the money came. Human porters had to do the job, since the tse-tse fly excluded animal-transport quite apart from the obstacles provided by deserts and swamps. All these difficulties are parts of the African nature and have prevented the diffusion of wheeled carts as well as road-building, in spite of centuries-old contacts with the neighbouring cultures which have utilized those devices for as long as one can remember.

With the ever-increasing demand for ivory in the billiard-playing Europe of Queen Victoria, a likewise increasing profit awaited the successful trader on ready markets along the coast. More and more porters were needed to bring more and more ivory from elephant hide-outs to port. Normally no African of those days would have voluntarily left his tribal lands to carry heavy loads to a distant shore where nobody spoke his language. Yet porters were needed and slavery became the solution. Once on the coasts, with their precious burdens, it might have appeared more profitable to their owners to sell the slaves there and then instead of running the risk involved in a costly and dangerous return trip to the hunting grounds up-country where, moreover, most of the recently captured slaves were at home among their own people and might attempt an escape.

Devil or chance played into the hands of the slavers. The French colonization of the Reunion, Mauritius and Seychelles islands created just at that time a demand for cheap labour comparable to, even though on a lesser scale than that of America (Grey, 1958: 38ff). Thus a market for commercial slavery developed in Africa which was on principle different from the original Arab interest in its more domestic aspect.

However Arabs are realists. Some ruthless individuals among them were not slow in perceiving the commercial chances of the situation, without thereby abandoning altogether their own form of slavery with its more humane element. Islamic Law rules that a slave woman be freed once she has borne a child to her master. The child is implicitly free. This law has generally been obeyed by all but utterly hard-boiled Arab slavers. Most, but not all, slave traders in East Africa were Arabs—which is not to say that every Arab settled in East Africa was engaged in that disreputable commerce. This fact has been often overlooked in European records on Afro-Arab relations. The majority of Arabs in Zanzibar and along the east coast were benevolent administrators, cocoanut planters and traders in less ominous goods. They were the builders of the present good relations between Arabs and Africans for which frequent intermarriage was no doubt a prerequisite. One of the principal contact points for such satisfactory relations was the Mikindani Bay in Southern Tanganyika, an area inhabited by the Yao group of Bantu speakers. Most tribes of this group were, and many

still are, matrilineal and matri- or uxori-local. Apart from the Wa-Yao themselves, there are also the Wa-Makonde, with their now outmoded custom of lip-plugs for women, the Wa-Mawiha, still adorned by artistically zigzagging tatoo patterns between temples, eyes and chin, and the Wa-Mwera, further north, in Lindi District.

The particular situation between Arab settlers and matrilineal African tribes happened to be connected with my main quest at Makerere: to find out where best to start field-work among matrilineal societies in British East Africa.

Aidan Southall thought that a study on the Makonde Plateau would be particularly rewarding. Dr. Whiteley, who had a few years previously done field-work among the matrilineal Wa-Makua around and even on the Plateau, could recommend this with special competence. The Makonde tribe was then passing through a revolutionary economic change brought about by the Makonde Water Corporation. The corporation, sponsored by the Government, works a pumping scheme to bring drinking water up to the Plateau which is a dry, sandy ridge. There are neither springs, nor rivers, nor even tanks to fall back on during the long dry season from April to October. During the months without rain, drinking water had to be brought from rivers and springs in the plains and carried on head or shoulder over long distances and a steep escarpment. But during the rains the rich soil yields enough to support a population which increased three-fold during less than thirty years of accurate census taking.

The Makonde Water Corporation had just begun to operate its widely spread out pumping scheme and it should now be possible to analyse the social change set into motion by this sudden mechanization. This was no doubt an interesting proposition.

I began there and then on the task. The library of the Institute faces the wing with living quarters at an irregular and thus inviting angle, over an incline of green lawns, dotted with trees in the African parkland style. They attract a variety of birds from the open rolling country. If one lives in the Institute's premises, one feels almost as in a well equipped expedition caravan, I thought. One sees, hears and senses the African scenery all around, whilst one prepares a simple meal, or gets hot water ready on the electric stove which is installed in the kitchen-pantry and bathroom of each single flat. The building is constructed on cement concrete pillars at first floor

height and over a clean shade-space for motor-cars. The whole complex has been planned in an irregular adaptation to local environment and conditions, which is as functional as it is beautiful. A lasting memory to the creative capacity of Dr. Audrey I. Richards. Before building up the East African Institute of Social Research, here at Makerere, she had established her reputation as the author of *Mother-Right Among the Central Bantu* (1934) and a sequence of other brilliant studies dealing with "the Matrilineal Belt", especially her works on the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia so near to the matrilineal peoples of Southern Tanganyika. Mauve bougainvillea crept over the wall opposite my flat and a cyprus tree from the car shade reached my balcony. All were pointed out to me as so many fruits of her genius for detail and wholeness, for function and beauty:

"She loved gardening and did much of the planting herself," I thought.

Could I have hoped for a more congenial environment to prepare my own work on matrilineal societies?

At dawn, every morning before the rising sun shot its orange darts through the grey fog of Lake Victoria, the sound of the birds' concert entered my room through the wide open glass panes of the balcony. It sounded like a promise of life in the African bush. Every morning I listened awhile to this message of the African birds. They seemed to repeat their clear-cut wooden calls with the precision of a xylophone orchestra or of a *ngoma*, the drum performance executed in gay dances or serious initiation rituals for boys and girls. Even the African crow makes no exception. It is a large fellow with white chest and back, like a European magpie but with a shorter tail and a bulkier body. Its crowing has neither the force of its European, nor the insistence of its Indian cousins which seem all the time to demand something, a little morsel of food as a *shraddha* offering to the manes, or at least some attention. Nothing of the kind spoke to me through the distantly aloof voice of the African crow. His cry too was a kind of sound weaving, a rhythm merging into the wider pattern of calls and whistles that came from all kinds of grey, brown, blue birds with strangely shaped beaks, tails and head crests. This early concert mixed with the changing tints of the morning sky until everything was aglow with the day's full, yellow light—the African light. With its brilli-

ance, questions began to rise in my mind as to what the African atmosphere would show me. Was it to be the proverbial "Dark Continent?" Was it a vague fear? What new experiences were in store for me—what new vista of life, such as I had not seen before?

Was it the harbinger of a coming day for Africa and perhaps also for the world? Or would this new day be like the thousand other old days of the past? Or would it be the same old story overcrowded with the dust and the gloom of contradiction and uncertainty?

Ivory and slavery, birds' calls and *ngoma* rhythms. I had quite a lot of loose ends to deal with—or bind together.

2. *The Bride-Price*

AN anthropological study of anthropologists has not yet been undertaken (as far as I know) though this would seem a promising field of enquiry into the abysmal depths of the human mind.

What is it that attracts human curiosity about the world towards man? Is it the curious subject itself? What unforeseeable twist of the mind turns into an anthropologist a person who could have been a zoologist, an astro-physicist, or may be a philosopher? And further: which fatal constellation makes that person—once the first critical step towards anthropology is taken—behave in those queer ways for which anthropologists have become known during the last half century or so, for changing directions rather frequently and abruptly in the quest for an explanation of the seemingly unexplainable differences between forms of social life, ideals and the human will through which they come to exist?

One may ask: Why do anthropologists study human behaviour as though it was something completely outside the scope of their own inner perception? The answer is, of course: to get an objective, unbiased point of view. But if this is the aim, what prompts them to change the course of their inquiries, their methods in a manner more reminiscent of the tailoring and confectionery industry, than of scientific investigation?

At one time, interest was taken in other peoples' ways of life only because they were considered queer by virtue of being different from the investigator's own way of life. At another time it became the craze to see all civilizations as though they were on the move from one form, the primitive, to another, the progressive, and everybody seemed to have found "origins", when a little later migrations or diffusions of culture and cultural possessions held the field, only to give way to another fashion entirely based on the co-functions that in fact exist between economic interests, structures of social organizations and religious rituals.

But is this really all, if we come to determine the final impulses that made civilizations grow and decay? Neither human curiosity

nor the vanity of man has so far succeeded in lifting the anthropological level of enquiry beyond that of fads which come and go to the tune of clever designers whose sole interest is to get old clothes out of mode so that people are obliged to spend their money in purchasing new ones. That does not mean that the last fashion is necessarily bad, though it also does not mean that it is necessarily better than its predecessor. To consider state "B" more progressive than state "A" simply because "B" follows "A" implies that individual death is more progressive than individual life. Should we not conclude from all this that a certain amount of caution is indicated in our dealing with fashions unless we are after a good turnover or, in other words, money?

One anthropological fashion is the interpretation of marriage-payments, a well established institution since long among African cattle herders and a more recent innovation among matrilineal farmers.

When at the height of European overseas expansion anthropology tried its first steps in baby-shoes, every custom or institution in extra-European societies was decried as savage and barbarian unless it was done the way Europeans did things. Bride-price payments too were at that time, no doubt wrongly, interpreted as a manifestation of cave-man's brute force and his ability to order women about, either dragging her away by her long hair to satisfy a sexual urge, or at best purchasing her as a mere chattel from her natural owner, the father. Later the fallacy of this pseudo-scientific myth was exploded, especially after studies had been made of the regularity and mutual compensation which exists in the movement of brides within a tribe from one clan to the other, and of cattle or other goods, in an opposite direction. Then the pendulum of anthropological fashion swung once more. Marriage payments are now sometimes seen as merely an evaluation of the bride's social prestige though she is in patrilocal societies given away and then in fact sometimes treated almost as a slave. Following this new interpretation, the similarity between the purchase of slaves and the acquisition of brides through payment is discarded. It is shown that the main function of the bride-price is to assure the stability of marriage, in the interest of the wives rather than in that of the husbands. But the fact here neglected is that in matrilineal and matrilocal societies brides normally are not given

away in marriage to the groom's family; the entire picture therefore is different as regards the function of marriage payments.

An almost classical area of the whole complex is East Africa with its cattle people, first and foremost the Nilo-Hamites but, to an extent also, their Bantu-speaking neighbours further south.

An opportunity to see something of these peoples came my way when I was invited to join a small party of research workers, newly arrived from England. They were going to Bugwere not far from Mbale in Eastern Uganda, with Aidan Southall as their guide and Fred, the African Kiswahili teacher. This was my chance to get a first impression of African rural life and see at the same time something of Uganda before going off to distant south-eastern Tanganyika.

The road from Kampala to Mbale cuts straight across the undulated country in between Lake Victoria and the Nile swamps. Climbing up the steep hillocks, one looks from below into a mass of overhanging branches and towering giant trees. We reached the new industrial centre Jinja, passed by its steaming chimneys and barrack towns for African workers, and dived with the broad asphalt road into the Nile swamps. Papyrus reeds stretched their asparagus-coloured fingers over that dreaming mystery: the head waters of the Nile. These waters seem to ooze out of the soil and open their calm eyes in lotus ponds, seemingly stagnant, yet moving on incessantly, for they are living waters, part of the stream that fills the lands of Africa with fecundity, the River Nile.

Aidan Southall chose a small rest-house in the green lands north of Tororo. The blue silhouette of Mount Elgon had been left behind and the swampy plains were dotted with the round houses of plantain growers and the dark shades of banana groves in the evening light. The kind of travellers' bungalow for touring officials was of course familiar to me from many similar ones I had been using in India, especially during the years before independence there, when they had not yet been so much in demand. This African species of the rest house family seemed to represent a later "evolutionary stage" than most of its Indian cousins I knew. It was armed with airtight steel-framed glass windows, of which only a few could be opened at all, whilst others were fixed into the walls without hinges.

Within the twelve walls of its three rooms the house harboured neither a piece of furniture nor anything which could have served as a stand for luggage; not to speak of typewriters, note books or files, for which folding chairs, folding tables and camp cots alone could be used. These one had to bring along with the tent equipment. I also missed the open verandah running around the old type rest house, so familiar in India.

The unfunctional innovations seemed, however, counter--balanced by a custom of apparently African origin: every evening the watchman lighted a logfire in the garden compound near one of its large umbrella trees. At more than four thousand feet, the air is refreshingly cool after sunset, even though practically on the equator, where November-December means as little "winter" as May-June means "summer". We enjoyed pleasant evening chats about the varied impressions of the day and, escaping the stuffy rooms with their glass panes in fixed steel frames, had a good night's rest outside on folding bedsteads; heads turned towards the smouldering fire because it kept mosquitoes away.

The soundless flight of nocturnal birds, bats and flying foxes passed during these nights between the outstretched leaf hands of big trees above and, against their sharply chiselled leaf pattern, a still more silent movement could be measured, when wakening between stretches of deep, dreamless sleep: the distant rotation of planets and the still less fathomable movement of the stars.

Political systems in Africa, both indigenous and European-adapted, follow also in Uganda the tripartite hierarchy of paramount chiefs, local authorities and finally sub-chiefs: there is the Kabaka in Kampala and in the districts are the Saza, and Gombolola chiefs of local importance. Our daily trips to their homesteads or smaller courts were patterned on a combination of original anthropological field work in a rather mechanized, conventional shell. This combination reminded me of the nights near logfire and tree, after the narrow escape from our stuffy steel frame rest house prison. Every morning we went by Land-Rover over a criss-cross of foot-paths and open, flat ground leading to round dwellings, tucked into the shade of dark green plantain groves.

Motor transport saves undoubtedly a lot of time which, only a few years back, would have been spent on foot *safari*, with a caravan of porters. But that again would have given closer contact

to the African earth and her peoples. However, once near a village we then left our vehicles and went on foot through the narrow, winding lanes between round houses or the now fashionable square buildings of Gombolola chiefs. An unmistakably African atmosphere prevailed, in spite of the rickety deck chairs which are now universally used among African peasants, instead of the wood carved stools of old tradition, considered old fashioned, too heavy and not "progressive", in spite of their functional stability, combined with an aesthetically appealing shape and harmonious proportions.

These wooden stools used to be cut from one single block, the segment of a tree, about half a yard in cross section. The top of this block is hollowed into a concave disk, well fitted as a seat, whilst the base is left even, a solid stand indeed. Top and base thus are formed by two solid disks, whilst the middle portion is carved out, leaving three slender, angularly bent stands, as link between the two main parts. The stool consequently gets the shape of a sand clock or a double drum held together by an impressively original, angular middle piece. Traditional furniture is made of good wood which shines in pleasant shades, from purple and chestnut to an almost black colour, if it is kept clean and occasionally rubbed with turpentine or oil. Many of these stools can now be seen in European homes of East Africa, standing on light coloured mats and, in the higher altitudes, near the fire-place. One sits well-centred and firmly secure on their broad, low-top disks. However, in the average African home, the rickety deck chair is preferred for its prestige value, being *Ki-Zungu*—European and hence "modern, progressive".

The more prominent sub-chiefs among our hosts spoke to Aidan Southall in Luganda, the court language of the Kabaka and the principal medium in this part of Uganda. But the simpler folk knew only their local Lunyole or Lujissu, translated by Fred, our untiring teacher of Kiswahili, a language with Bantu and Arabic elements. He spoke and taught this *lingua franca* of the coast elegantly even though it is not very popular among the Wa-Ganda on account of its traditional connections with the slave trading period, a century ago.

The hospitality of a somewhat formal kind which we received from the male members in these village homes never suggested sub-

missiveness, not even in a gesture or semi-automatic movement. But wives, mothers and daughters, who occasionally made their appearance with cups, full of orange juice, or of *pombe*, the local brew, used still to go down on their knees in the presence of their own elders and the assembled foreigners. This had been the customary greeting, even for men, when meeting Europeans or Arabs during the slave raiding period.

Women rarely spoke a word in our presence, unless laboriously encouraged by their men folk. Our conversations circled mainly around questions of political structure; the powers allotted to chiefs and sub-chiefs now, as compared with the situation in pre-British days. Eventually we hit upon this uncracked nut of anthropological theory—the bride-price.

Several heads of cattle were since times immemorial an acceptable gift for a bride in these parts of East Africa which, not being under the tse-tse fly, abound in bovine wealth. The social significance of cattle in Uganda is reinforced by the proximity, in the north, of Nilo-Hamites, for whom cows, bulls and calves have an almost emotional value. This attitude was conducive to the attachment of a higher value to domestic animals among the Bantu speaking farmers also, even though their approach to this matter may be somewhat more realistic than that of their northern neighbours.

“Five or ten cattle”, our farmer friends told us, “used to be given for a bride. But nowadays, girls are different. They go around. They travel on bicycles, sitting on the steel frame in front of their young men, or in country buses. They visit the *boma* (the District Office) at Mbale and then go to the cinemas. They see all sorts of different things in town.”

All this, it seemed, resulted in a local lowering of the bride-price. We have already seen that in most other parts of Africa the trend was towards an almost inflationary rise of bride-prices, which in fact had begun to worry administrative officers and community development organizers. Bride-price payments have taken on an almost universal importance in Africa. This custom spread all over the West Coast and into Central Africa. It was actually taken up even by matrilineal tribes, where the custom contradicts the functions of the traditional marriage system. In matrilineal societies, the residence of a newly married couple is generally matrilineal or uxori-local. This means that the young

wife has not to leave her parental home, or clan lands, at marriage. She is not "given away" in marriage, nor taken away, to the bridegroom's family or clan, but rather brings her young man as a welcome new member to her own family or neighbourhood. In not yet overpopulated Africa, an additional member is still considered an asset for a group, rather than a liability. Under these circumstances, the bride-price, as compensation for the loss of one working member, the girl, makes sense in a patrilineal system, but is contradictory to the very nature of matrilineal marriage. We shall later see that the imitation and adoption of bride-price payments by matrilineal peoples in Tanganyika, is actually one of the driving forces in the transformation of matrilineal residence patterns into patrilineal ones and militates thereby against mother-right as such.

The most disquieting feature in the rapid spread of the bride-price, an almost All-African institution, is its historical coincidence with the spread of slave trading during the 19th century. There can be little doubt that the two phenomena originated independently and grew from entirely different sources, having equally disconnected roots. However, we have also seen that higher prices which sexually desirable female slaves fetched had been held responsible for the sudden rise in the bride-price over large parts of Africa during the second half of the 19th century and thus made for mutually permeating interconnections between the two institutions.

When I heard of the locally dropping prices for brides in Uganda, it was at first not clear to me how the scope for newly introduced female activities could have resulted in the locally observed drop of traditional marriage payments to less than five heads of cattle, with perhaps a few extra goats as an additional *baksheesh*.

"Ah, but don't you see that many of the girls who go to town are no longer virgins now?"

Some of them, it was said, work as maid-servants in the bungalows of the *Wa-Zungu*, the Europeans, others with the *dukawallahs*, the Indian shop-keepers, and some go even as far as Mombasa, Dar-es-Salaam and Tanga, where they may become nannies, ayahs, prostitutes or sales girls, able to save money if they are lucky. A woman who earns and saves money herself will not care much about the marriage payments which go to her father or even other relatives, not to herself.

A link between falling bride-prices and rising divorce rates may have also been implied in such statements, though the elderly men with whom we discussed that complex problem seemed to link the prime cause for falling marriage payments to the emancipation of modern girls as such, and to the unwillingness of fathers to pay the traditional rate for these girls as prospective wives for their sons.

The desire to get formal education is one of the most striking features in all East Africa, especially among Africans themselves. My first personal experience of this psychological social feature came my way in one of the rural Community Development Centres where I was asked to talk on the changing position of women in India and some of the problems facing the younger generations of girls in that country.

Whilst going through all the familiar aspects of mechanization, industrialization and urbanization, we also discussed the problems connected with wage earning by women. I thought that it frequently hastens the general trend to split traditional joint family units. Naturally the dowry system as a target of Indian reformers was also mentioned in this connection. When I said how thoroughly unpopular this arrangement has become in India now among the younger girls, who think that it almost amounts to bribing a young man into the condescending acceptance of a wealthy maiden as his bride, a candidly simple question which could set every feminist thinking, was put to me:

"How is it that whatever the social arrangement may be it turns to the disadvantage of women?"

In reply, I could only point out that the two seemingly reversed arrangements were in fact not symmetrical opposites. The customary East African bride-price does not go to the bride herself, but to her father, her maternal uncle or other relatives, whilst the Indian dowry or "bridegroom-price" goes directly to the young man himself, thus strengthening his situation. The Islamic *mehr* or "morning gift", was, at least originally, to be handed to the bride herself in order to strengthen her position after marriage. It is by a semantic short-cut, which rather confuses the issue, that the term *mehr* is now being applied to a functionally totally different procedure: the payment *for* a bride to her family, instead of the direct payment *to* the bride with a view to providing for personal security in case of widowhood or divorce. Bride-price and *mehr*

hence are generally thought wrongly to be one and the same thing.

The discussion had a sequel on the next day when the young African woman officer of the Community Development Centre, in which my lecture took place, spoke to me about her experiences among the local peasant girls and wives. She was a graduate of Makerere, but in spite of this prestige had at first a hard time in getting at the peasant women at all, so suspicious were their menfolk. The next difficulty was to obtain permission for them to join any community activities in the centre: social entertainments, sometimes lectures on hygiene and different courses. Especially instruction in sewing, stitching and other kinds of needle work were stressed to win the menfolk's approval of the women joining. When we finally spoke about marriage rules and regulations, she remarked:

"We hope to bring down the bride-price to half its present amount. That would already go a long way to free women from their present position, almost like a slave in the husband's family. Everybody tells a young bride that so many good cattle have been given for her . . . Now she must work and obey. Almost like a slave!"

The last word struck me: once more the association of bride-price payments and slavery! How much of this woman worker's enthusiasm was hers? How much was borrowed from the community development course "home"—that means in England—from which she had returned only six or eight weeks before? What did she study there? British Sociology? African Anthropology? Or anti-slavery ideology?

The dark-blue tailored skirt, the freshly starched and ironed blouse which she wore, looked indeed as British as her delicately chiselled profile under the helmet-like curve of frizzly hair reminded me of ancient Egypt and, at any rate, of Africa. I thought of West Africa with its tradition of superb bronze casting, once encouraged in ancient kingdoms, and I asked:

"Do you know how this bride-price problem stands among the matrilineal tribes?"

Her large, intense eyes took one shade more of their quizzical expression and after a moment of hesitation she told me that she had never heard of such a thing as a matrilineal tribe and that she could not reply to my question.

3. *Mau Mau* *and* *Why ?*

IN the afternoon you take the Mombasa mail train which crawls slowly from Kampala to the coast. You go to bed in a tropical surrounding of papyrus, spreading its elegantly shaped cream and mauve leaves, like playing fingers over the Upper Nile swamps. The temperature is such that the thinnest white shirt makes you feel wet and sticky. But, the following morning you wake up at the railway station "Eldorette" or "Equator." You are in Kenya, on the plateau of the "White Highlands." An icy atmosphere makes you feel grateful for the woollen blanket which the railway provides in addition to meticulously white and freshly ironed bed-sheets for a rent of three shillings, approximately two rupees, per night. You travel about six thousand feet above sea level, back to the southern hemisphere.

It is a stern landscape, this highland plateau. It will speak to everyone who likes wide vistas and rural life. It will recall a kind of freedom which existed once in Europe also. Wide, undulating horizons fade into neither a bright green, nor the dead yellow of the parched savannahs. Now, in autumn, the rolling hills look like northern Europe in June, but during the dry season after Christmas, all colours will turn into a shimmering, dazzling white. As the train gently moves on, dales open up views into variegated landscapes: patches of dark blue coniferous trees, imported from Australia, and a multiplicity of rustic scenes. Black and white herds of Ayrshire cattle, brown sheep, dotted goats and pinkish-white European pigs. At a distance squats a square farm house, spreading rectangular patterns of hedges, trees, gardens and wire nettings, surrounding the piggery. The train passes through open land, interspersed by groups of indigenous, wind-worn leaf trees. Herds of zebras, giraffes and ostriches which could be seen at the beginning of World War II, twenty years ago, have disappeared: some soldiers machine-gunned them. But the round backs of antelopes and spring buck are still seen as they flash through the undulating meadows.

As the sun rises rapidly in front of us, a gloriously crystal-clear

light spreads over the country. Thousands of plump little snow-ball clouds emerge from the bottomless blue and appear to float into our world from nowhere, just for the fun of it, for the joy of being.

Travelling on the silvery and navy-blue first class coaches of the East African Railways is quite pleasant. Obviously these Pullman cars were designed to set a standard of utility, cleanliness and good taste for public services. At the time of their construction, after the first world war, first class travel was virtually reserved for Europeans only. This is not so now. Occasionally, one sees a young African Member of the Legislative Council, or an elderly African Chief travelling in compartments which however are generally left to themselves alone, though there is no regulation about it. One also sees large Indian families, or "Asians" as the official designation goes. However, Indian first class travellers on the railways are the exception, rather than the rule. Most of the truly rich Indians in East Africa travel by plane or, over short distances, in their own big cars, for they have even less leisure than the Europeans. Time to them is money and modern business swallows time.

The co-traveller in my compartment was an Englishman, returning to his firm in Mombasa, after a short round trip to Murchinson Falls. Although there was a wash basin with running water concealed under the smoothly shining and dark green table plate at my bedside, I did not want to inconvenience my neighbour in the morning by opening the wash stand. So I went for my morning shower and shave to one of the common bathrooms. There were two of them at each end of the corridor car, one labelled "European Style", the other "Asian Style". There was none "African", and neither of the two extra-continentially styled bath-rooms was fitted with a shower, such as the Indian old first class compartments provide. Hardened to unexpected experiences by my profession and the various kinds of travel it involves, I settled down to scrub my skin, and used for the purpose the generously supplied little cake of pleasantly perfumed soap in its sealed paper wrapper which was inscribed "East African Railways". I hoped to remove the abundantly produced lather with what I anticipated would be an equally generous supply of water. In this I was sadly mistaken. There was indeed some thin ray of water, trickling into the wash basin, as long as I pressed hard on the trigger of the waterpipe.

But it stopped, as soon as the pressing hand tried to catch some of the flowing water which moreover came from a tiny hole in the side wall of the basin. It was virtually impossible to get one's fingers directly wetted by the clean flow of water. There was no other way of getting at it than let it flow into the wash basin and afterwards transfer it to body and face. This bowl had been shining silvery at the beginning of our journey, the preceding afternoon. Since then it had been used, and neither looked, nor was, antiseptic anymore—to put it mildly. So it had to be done: with the hollowed hand the water was spooned out by instalments, from the no more shiny basin to the thick fluffy lather. In the process a lake was created on the floor. It consisted of much soap and a little water, and refused to drain away through the few holes on the ground which was insufficiently, if at all, slanting. The soap lake kept nicely wobbling between my toes when it came to shaving. That operation turned out to be another problem. No plug for an electro-shave. No shelf broad enough to spread out razor, shaving soap, brush, "Shell Horse Scorcher" and towel, with the result that, when the train suddenly bent in a steep curve whilst I was engaged in smoothening my chin with a murderous instrument, parts of this equipment tumbled into the soap lake on the ground.

Everything in these luxury coaches, from the delicate colour scheme and streamlined shape of the whole carriage to the card-board tumbler and the starched towel hidden in a catch under the bedside table, seemed pleasing and ideally functional. But in practice it turned out not to be quite so. Somehow the whole thing reminded me of the immovable glass panes in the narrow, airless rest house in Uganda from which we fled to sleep in the open.

I returned somewhat exhausted to my compartment where I found my co-traveller already clean shaven, but probably as little shower-bathed as I was. And he had still one more full day and another night journey to Mombasa before him. For a long time we looked silently at the homely scenery outside, which, he later said, reminded him of his native Scotch Highlands whilst it recalled to me the *Waldviertel* of Lower Austria. Rolling meadows, ripening wheat over vast expanses and, in between, an occasional farm house.

"Once I drove up here," he thought aloud, "for a short holiday. To visit a farmer friend. It was a pleasant crisp day, sunny and cool.

Like today. It was good to drive through the night from sticky Mombasa . . . I looked forward to a good farmer's breakfast. But when I entered my friend's house, his body was literally spread out over the whole place in minute pieces. Up to the ceiling. The minced meat of two loyal Kikuyu servants was all mixed up with it. It was a horrible mess. Something I haven't seen during six years of war service."

After a while he spoke again :

"And this happened to a man who had been always sure that *they* would not touch *him*. He had been their brother, already as a kid when he spoke Kikuyu almost more easily than English."

By "they" he meant the Mau Mau.

The train reached Nakuru punctually a few minutes before noon. Nakuru has three different aspects: it is a clean, trim, little farmers' town with co-operative stores, motor company agencies and flower gardens in the European centre, an Indian garden town around a huge, red-tiled "Indian Association Hall", and a *shanty* town for Africans. This zone is progressively broken up and replaced by long barracks looking like jails, along narrow lanes without trees or gardens.

I was greeted at Nakuru railway station by a Scandinavian friend and his wife with whom I was going to spend the time until the Government of Tanganyika Territory would decide about my plan to pursue anthropological field work in that country. My farmer-host introduced me at once to an English woman whose experiences and views, he knew, would interest me. She worked as a Community Development Officer for the resettlement of Kikuyu widows and orphans whose menfolk had perished during the Emergency, or were still in concentration camps. She was in a way an opposite number to the Mu-Ganda girl who had told me about the bride-price problems of peasants in Unyole and Ujissu. Problems in Kenya were even more serious now, after the suppression of the Mau Mau Rebellion and community development activities were exposed to criticism from two hostile camps, the European and the African.

The three of us drove to the nearby picturesque Lake Nakuru, famous for its flamingoes. The flamingo beak is large and ponde-

rously shaped, like a palaeolithic stone tool. It slips into the water with the gliding softness of a cat's-paw and yet with so much force that the bird's whole frame vibrates, as though under an invisible pressure. The long legs at the same time move gracefully, easily, which is surprising in such a dangerously elongated pair of stands made out of bony horns or horny bones.

"This has now been officially declared a bird sanctuary" explained the community development woman.

"... After a lot of opposition" added my Scandinavian host with an ironical smile.

"Yes. Quite right. Opposition on the part of the European community!"

The two seemed thoroughly good friends, but yet continued to play the game of two opposing political parties to which they belonged. She, as a staff member of a British Government institution, stood for the ideal of multi-racial fairplay and goodwill. He, as White settler, had to maintain that this was a White man's country, by virtue of having been developed by the White man's superior technology and agricultural methods.

"Do you think the Natives would care two hoots about birds if they'd taken over?"

When I saw his daily life on the farm, I found him friendly, sympathetic to his African labourers. He shouted and laughed with them in a rough and ready manner which they seemed to like, for they drove with enthusiasm or repaired a big combine, repainting it in flaming red, whilst he was lying under the machine, putting it to pieces, and back again, with the help of a particularly attentive man.

"Oh, they are basically good chaps—most of them at least. And they'll do anything for you, as long as you are human and just. It is only the outsiders who spoil them."

These "good chaps" were Kikuyu, members of the tribe which became world-known for its paramount share in the Mau Mau Rebellion.

The Mau Mau Rebellion of Kenya got headlines as a sensational affair, and a library has been written about it. I shall not try to cash in on this notoriety, much less to add one more flashy report to a

topic which has no news value just at present, but there are aspects of this conflict which have to be considered.

The total population of Kenya was estimated at six and a half million: less than one twentieth of this is made up by the two immigrant groups, the Asian numbering about 165,000, and the European numbering 64,700. Less than half of these Europeans are actual farmers in the White Highlands, the rest being in business, Police, Army and administration. The numerical position of Europeans is even less favourable than that in the Union of South Africa, where 3,011,000 Whites, as estimated for mid-1958, dominate 9,606,000 Africans, 441,000 Asians and 1,360,000 so-called "Coloureds," without civil rights. One characteristic of the European population is its diversity. There are Scandinavians, some Swiss, many Germans, Austrians, Czecho-Slovakians, Hungarians, Poles, Jewish refugees, Russian counter-revolutionaries, Italian Fascists who had come to Ethiopia as Mussolini's soldier colonists, and had then fled that country after its restoration to Independence. There are also Greeks, Armenians and also some Christian Arabs from Lebanon or the United Arab Republic.

At the end of the 19th century, British rule and economic exploitation of Uganda had grown sufficiently stabilized to recommend the construction of a railway line linking the port of Mombasa with Lake Victoria and Uganda. This was a big enterprise, begun in 1901 and carried out with indented labour, mostly from north-western India, especially from Gujerat. Whilst building this railroad over the cool highlands of what is now the Kenya Colony many dangers were experienced: prides of lions, Masai warriors, and the climate which at an altitude of six to ten thousand feet was definitely more congenial to Scottish civil engineers and foremen than to the average Gujerati railway worker.

During the first decade of the 20th century after the coast-to-lake railway had begun to run regularly, if not profitably, through the seemingly unpopulated plateau, it occurred to some of the Europeans who had come to know the area, that it held great possibilities for settlement. Especially Lord Delamere, the "Father of the Settlers," experimented on a large scale with sheep, cattle, wheat, creameries, flour mills, the meat, and wool business (Gunther, 1957: 312) to make the Kenya Highlands a White settlers' paradise in the midst of "The Dark Continent." The people who had first

responded to this newly opened opportunity were for the most part well-to-do Englishmen, often second sons of influential fathers who liked game hunting in overseas countries, adventure mixed with club life minus the somewhat narrow atmosphere of late Victorian or Edwardian England. In a delightful climate they found herds of zebras, antelopes, gnus, Thompson gazelles, ostriches and lions, whilst the African population, consisting mostly of the submissive Kikuyus, was fast dwindling. Further north there were the warlike picturesque Masai, almost as congenial to the soldier type of Englishmen, as the North-West Frontier Tribes, or the Gurkhas were in India.

It happened that at this very time several seemingly disconnected factors worked together in creating the impression among Europeans that the Kikuyus at any rate were on the brink of extinction, much in the same way as it seemed at that time to be the indisputable fate for the Amerinds, the native peoples of the Americas, to give way to the onward march of evolution and progress, by quietly and silently dying out . . . As in the case of the Incas, Aztecs and Mayas, so also in that of the Kikuyus and Masai did the Europeans appear on the scene in a moment of intense internal crisis and strife. The slow but steady pressure on the part of Nilo-Hamite cattle herders, such as the Masai, had already pushed back the more passive, agricultural Bantu tribes, such as the Mizi Chenda on the coast, or, in this area, the Kikuyus. An age-old conflict had thus developed between the aggressive Nilo-Hamites in the north, whom some anthropologists suspected to be descendants of the lost Jewish tribes, and their Bantu speaking neighbours. The Kikuyus as one of the northernmost Bantus in Kenya had to bear the brunt of the Masai attack. Tribal warfare and a not too voluntary kind of intermarriage between pretty Kikuyu girls and the powerful Masai had thus gradually evolved and come to a pitch just when European settlement started in full earnest after 1903. A similar situation developed also elsewhere between the Masai advancing in Tanganyika and the Bantus—the main difference being that in the meanwhile they found in the invading Germans, opponents who were less ready than the British to see the other chap's point of view, or at least to appreciate a good enemy rather than a bad friend.

“If we hadn't come, the Kikuyus would have been put to rout

and exterminated" was the reaction of the British, who as I said, rather liked the noble and picturesque Masai Borans, the warriors, though they fought them.

However, it was not only Law and Order which the British and German colonizers brought to these countries. They also brought so far unknown contagions: venereal diseases, tuberculosis and lesser infections which proved fatal to African men and cattle. These had not yet built up any resistance and died in their thousands. Rinderpest among cattle, measles, pneumonia and even quite ordinary flus among adults and children took a heavy toll of lives. It is believed that the Kikuyu population during the first years of contact with "civilization" dwindled to less than half of its pre-European number. At that time it seemed to be a foregone conclusion that the combined effects of previous defeats at the hand of the Masai, the recent impact of superior European technology, agriculture and economic organization, plus the devastating new diseases, would produce the same inertia and failing will to live which seemed to seal the fate of the aboriginal peoples in America, Australia and elsewhere. "Survival of the fittest" was the slogan. Who was fitter than the White man? A few strips of land were marked off as Kikuyu Reserves and the rest left to evolution. For whom this evolution would ultimately work seemed self-evident.

Yet this very same evolution took an unexpected turn. A big proportion of the Kikuyu tribe exhibited surprising eagerness for religious conversion. The Kikuyus now well over a million became *the* pet tribe of Christian missionaries. Mission schools and the clothing industry got busy, and changed the outer and inner appearance of this people as radically as nobody could have thought possible. The product of these activities turned out to be a double-edged sword. It was unfortunately wielded by a not very happy child of Christian civilization distorted by puritanism, and African traditional culture misled into thoughtless imitation. By the end of World War I there was already a strong group of Christianized and westernized Kikuyus who despised their own culture, laughed at tribal traditions, art and dress styles, because they had been indoctrinated with the idea that all this, as in fact everything African, was *chenzi*, an outward sign of paganism and savagery. European clothing and European methods of making money were the hallmark of civilization and of course—progress ! Consequently the proselytes

imitated European ways in every respect from heavy boots to aggressiveness, from all-covering clothes to shrewd business. They proved their ability for progress to others and themselves.

Between the two world wars, a new type of non-British immigrant appeared on the scene, who, apart from racial and cultural differences between Black and White, also emphasized other European "superiorities". Undigested chunks of anthropology were woven into a novel system to prove the superiority . . . well, not of the Africans. They hadn't invented a script, they didn't even use the wheel until "we came." The scarcely disguised expectation, and to some perhaps even the hope, persisted that these primitive savages would soon go the way the Amerinds, or Tasmanians went—that they would just die out. The young heir waited for the sick, old man to die. He gave him a little cottage for the purpose—the reservation.

Here a fundamental question arises.

Is domination of the weaker by the stronger really and truly the human, let alone the only mode of feasible relationships between different groups of *homo sapiens*? Can people of different physical appearance, or, for that matter, of different cultures, not live together as equals?

If by "equals" we mean to postulate "the same," it must be admitted that there is little chance of a workable solution, because different groups are as far from being "the same" as different individuals are. Unless an intense system of permanently recurring intermarriages could be elaborated, the differences between various *degrees* of interbreeding and of intercultural consolidation could not be levelled out. They exist for instance between numerous sections of the "Coloureds" in the U.S.A. or of Anglo-Indians in India and Pakistan. These differences could be levelled out only in the way single individuals solve their problems in successful marriages. This approach to intercultural problems is in itself not altogether utopian. It has proved successful in Hawaii, though under particularly favourable circumstances, and may one day also be achieved in Brazil, in Mexico and perhaps also in other Latin American countries. However it is not likely to be a realistic aim for a near future in Africa.

Yet, some solution has to be found *very soon* in more than one country of this vast continent. There must not be much delay, if a great tragedy for all mankind, a Mau Mau uprising on a large

scale with its implications of horror and terror, is to be avoided.

One crucial aspect of this problem has to be faced.

Does the recognition of existing differences imply discrimination?

Does it mean that, if husband and wife are admittedly different, one has got to dominate the other?

Does it mean that inferiority and superiority, with their rat-tails of respective complexes, have to be condoned?

It does not mean this in Hawaii, nor even in Brazil and Mexico. Let us try to understand why those complexes play such a very great role in African countries and especially where Europeans settled in considerable numbers. Indeed—why?

There is one obvious error involved in most of the approaches which have so far been tried in this matter. Habitually this question is asked as if it were one of the Africans *versus* the Europeans, or Asians, whereby worlds of differentiation which, as we have seen, do exist inside each of these races are being overlooked. There are numerous sub-groups within every racial, linguistic, religious, or—generally speaking—cultural unit, everywhere on this planet, hence also within the African, European and Asian communities. Let us see how these sub-groups work together. For one thing it should be realized that every national or quasi-national unit comprises men and women, different age-classes and also in most, though not in all societies, different economic and social levels. It is part of the anthropologist's job in Africa to see and describe such internal differentiation, especially as far as the African side of the picture is concerned. The importance of this very job begins to dawn upon the average European administrator.

But what about the European side of the picture? What about the roles which men and women play on both sides? Who cares for these questions?

These varied and many aspects of racial relations have yet been scarcely touched. There are scores of related problems. One of them is the diversity of the European immigrant populations and their respective backgrounds. This diversity plays a dominant part in the day-to-day life of the White settlers in Kenya, as it does in South Africa and again in Algeria, and it affects race relations generally. A high percentage of the Whites in all these countries stems from national origins other than that of the locally dominant European group. This situation alone is conducive to the develop-

ment of inferiority feelings and the all too familiar mechanism of over-compensation and a partly submerged will to aggression, even between the Europeans themselves. Trends of this kind are of course not only detrimental to those who suffer from inferiority feelings but also to those who have to live with such persons. More so, if the real motivation for the will to aggression remains submerged in the sub-conscious *i.e.*, if its true nature is not consciously recognized.

Continental European immigrants, in spite of their speaking English well, as some of them do, are still outsiders to the real English—even if they are no more considered as a kind of almost coloured continentals, such as they most certainly had been to the older and more conservative *burra Sahibs*, who used to retire after successful service in India to a comfortable country-house “at home,” or bought a considerably bigger but otherwise similar farm in Kenya.

To the others, that is to say to the group of non-English second-class Europeans, few things are easier to do, and more tempting, than to prove their coveted status of full-fledged White men or women by emphasizing and thus widening the gulf between Europeans and non-Europeans, between themselves and the Natives (or Asians). It is the old story of converts trying to be more papal than the Pope, of Herr Goebbels with a very prominently mediterranean face trying to out-do even his Nazi colleagues by being more exclusively nordic—ideologically—than themselves. This is not to say that all non-English Europeans are necessarily and always colour-prejudiced racial snobs. Some, especially Scandinavians, are not affected by this contagious disease. Yet they are the exception rather than the rule. The majority is under the influence of the simple but compelling mechanism inherent in every human society, the hunt for prestige. And this hunt tends to emphasize black *versus* white wherever a composite group of ruling and economically privileged Europeans lives among indigenous, ruled, and, on the whole, economically exploited Africans. It is those very Europeans who feel least at ease within the European scale of superiority and inferiority, who also tend to be least tactful in their attitude towards non-Europeans. This is so in Kenya, as it is in South Africa or even in Algeria. There too “French *colons*” of Italian, Spanish, Greek, Czecho-Slovakian or any other continental European origin, may be more likely to refer to the Arabs as *bicots*, than *colons* of truly

French origin who, being born members of *La Grande Nation*, feel perhaps less compelled to demonstrate this fact by ostentatious behaviour.

Combined with this attitude is an almost personal insistence on racial prestige, on religious superiority and on economic success, the *White Man's Burden*. This mentality carries the germ of emotional reactions, so much more pernicious as they remain largely submerged in the sub-conscious of both parties. A chain of wrong actions and disproportionately magnified counter-actions is set into motion by the individual self-interest of all people suffering from inferiority feelings. To admit their motivations, *even to themselves* would cut at the very root of their self-respect, and is therefore psychologically blocked, almost out of the question. This is a truly tragic situation. Doubly and three times tragic, because it was initiated not so much by ill-will and malice, but by ignorance, short-sightedness and misjudgement of the fundamental factor in all human affairs, human nature itself.

It was a slow process of feeling my way through many long drawn-out discussions on the "Native Problem" which cropped up in every European farm, club, or even in Community Development Centres. There is, among White settlers in Kenya, a very common and almost never contested opinion: "Before the missionaries got the upper hand, the Native knew his place and was contented in it. But first the missionaries and then the British M.Ps. came, put beans into their heads and made them into ill-contented misfits. They taught the Natives after a syllabus worked out for English children, dressed them up as Europeans, and told them that they are just as good Christians as ourselves if only they go every Sunday to church, pay their subscriptions and marry one wife only—legally—pinching the others from their own cousins, or going right out to the prostitutes in Nairobi, whilst the wife is breast-feeding, when there was no such thing among them before."

The tall, grey-haired and very active wife of a farmer who told me of these interpretations, was not a sentimental admirer of the noble savage, much less a colour-prejudiced fanatic, but a representative and socially influential member of the White settler community in Kenya. She was eager to be just and to

admit the good qualities in the non-Mau Mau Kikuyus. However, she insisted that all trouble came from the missionaries teaching to read "the Bible first and later the newspapers" which paved the way for British Labour Party members and will, many thought, undoubtedly lead to the coming of Nasser's agents and finally to that of the communists, unless . . .

In this case it was unspoken, but, as I felt, palpable thinking: The Americans, Australians, Tasmanians and other European overseas colonists got rid of their Natives in straightforward wars of extermination. Why can't we?

Most White settlers did not seem to realize that a hundred years of inter-cultural relations, changed transport facilities and social conditions, new ideologies and trends in anthropology have altered world opinion fundamentally.

Another thing which intrigued me was the view, almost universally expressed in Kenya, that women, more than men, were responsible for the emotional stress in race relations.

This contradicted experiences gathered during communal disturbances in India. Women there tended to be bridge-builders between hostile groups, whilst males rather were held responsible for extreme measures. How many women welfare workers, Muslim and Hindu did not successfully co-operate in the restoration of abducted and raped girls to their respective communities! Coming from India, as I did, and hearing that in Africa women of both major struggling groups, black and white, particularly the latter, are being accused of pouring oil into the flames of racial jealousy and hatred, I suspected European males were simply gibing women as such, or scoffing at sentiments. It was after all part of the game and the right type of behaviour pattern for the real he-man. A little later, however, I began to sense here a deeper problem, as little divorced from mother-right in East Africa, as the whole complex problem of slave trade in the continent was.

Most European women, to begin with, showed that they were not interested in the Natives, nor in the Asians for that matter. They did not seem particularly eager to be at all reminded of these two groups by talking to an anthropologist. At best I got remarks like this:

"Oh, the Natives? Yes, yes, we've two dozens of them on the farm, whom Tom tackles. There are three house-boys and a girl for

Baby whom I myself manage. Quite a job—you may believe me. And one that teaches me cultural anthropology at that, if, for instance the kitchen boy, after fifteen years' service, hits upon the bright idea of serving roast-beef with custard . . . !”

Generally one did not mention the Natives, especially Native women—unless in a joke. It was almost like a tacitly observed taboo which somehow recalled that on sex in polite society of the Victorian age.

One day returning to Nakuru, from the farm of my Scandinavian friend, I met an interesting woman in the club. She came from a good English family, and was eager to hear about life in India after Independence. Everything seemed to interest her. The questions she asked showed that she did not play the ostrich's game and that she was aware of independence coming to African countries. That was quite exceptional in the atmosphere generally prevailing in the White Highlands.

I spoke to her about my life in South India, mentioning that there are about two thousand British residents now in Madras and a large number of Americans and continental Europeans. Far more than before Independence.

But she asked further. What had happened to the Anglo-Indians? Some of them, very fair and blue-eyed, had come to Kenya. What about the rest? What about the Goanese? And the Indian Christians? Her curiosity was almost anthropological.

“How do working women fare? Are there many Hindu and Muslim girls working in offices now?”

I expressed my amazement at her informed questions.

But she explained that many of her girl friends out there had been born in India and had spent parts of their lives there, before they came to Kenya after the war or after spending some time in England.

She herself has held a responsible position in a European office but resigned the good job on getting married to a European farmer, born and bred in Kenya, because a married woman could not hold that particular post.

“Don't think our men here are feminists by any chance. With all their getting up whenever a girl enters a room ! Men stick together. Their *esprit de corps* transgresses even colour. They side African men and rule that African women can't have a drink of *pombe* at

the native beer bar. Not because tribal law would prohibit this, but because the male European municipal administrators voted against it."

I wondered whether European women would not understand the problems of their African sisters better than men.

"I certainly would, if you ask me personally," she added, promising to tell me more about it some other day:

"It's a frightful tension which our White girls create out here," she remarked.

I went to queue at the buffet for French beans and Italian olives. Bringing back the dishes to our table, I noticed that there was not a single non-European face in the room, apart from the table boys in white robes and coloured fez-caps. Was this cream-and-salmon coloured club a pocket of colour-bar, I asked.

"No, but this is a private club, you see. I can't bring an Indian girl, even as guest for a game of tennis, though she is one of our best co-workers in the centre and a very pleasant friend."

At that moment an elderly lady caught up with our conversation, linking the role of average European women in the racial conflict with their traditional position in Europe.

"Women at home are still at a disadvantage. Old tradition makes parents prefer boys. They are the potential heirs of the family name and tradition. The potential bread-winners. They are *men*. True, the situation has changed a lot since the two world wars and in favour of working women. But the numerical position has worsened and it is just impossible—I don't know exactly for how many out of a hundred women—to get a husband under the law of monogamy. Extra-marital relations are still discriminated against—even in Sweden, though less there than anywhere else."

By the time we had reached black coffee, she went on:

"Equality is a pretty phrase, but not a frightfully realistic one—I am afraid. There are very few women in a position of authority over men. Compare this to our situation out here. There isn't one woman without a male servant here and most of us had to look after farm labour as well, during the emergency, at any rate when our men were in service or wounded in hospital or killed."

But that was only one side of the picture. Even within the European community itself, a woman's position was very different from what it is in Europe:

"Here we have a surplus of unmarried men!"

Would a girl not be blind to overlook the inner connection between her unusually privileged position and the ban on social relations with non-Europeans?

"It is the girls of poorer background who feel the difference to the situation at home most, and therefore stress the social distance to the Africans." The social mechanism which presses the second class European to widen the major gulf between European and non-European races, operates also in a comparable situation among European women, particularly among those of humble social origin.

I heard later a Kenya joke which illuminated the sexual character of the entire situation, as though in a flash. A European politician, it was narrated, hailed the concept of multi-racial co-operation: "I am quite prepared to consider any decent African as my brother, but," the good man added cautiously, "*not* as my brother-in-law!"

Is it then blood, instinct or human nature which allegedly makes for racial discrimination, racial injustice and finally for racial hatred? Or is it rather a peculiar social situation, a kind of cultural setting, which can be traced, analysed and finally directed, just as any other social mechanism? Is it human nature, inborn in our very essence of life—or is it human culture, instilled by a system of behaviour patterns?

Whilst asking myself these questions, I was painfully aware of my inability to find satisfactory answers. Pondering over common, but perhaps not causally linked, origins of social behaviour, the inter-connection between bride-price—marriage payments—and slavery crept back into my mind. It made me feel uneasy. Has one caused the other? Is there a common cause for both? Or did they just happen to coincide?

More uncertainty, more questions. An important point, a big one, which touches all of us all the time in the most trivial and most commonplace occurrences of everyday life: who is responsible for the retrograde trend in progress—constructing travellers bungalows in tropical countries with immovable glass-panes, useful perhaps in Canadian pine forests, but clearly out of place in the banana groves of Uganda? And who provides first-class railway carriages with all sorts of niceties for a pleasant appearance, failing to make arrangements for bare necessities such as, for instance, easy and clean bathing? Certainly not people inspired by ill-will, or trying

to cut off their noses to spite their faces! Perhaps people who are set into a peculiar situation, by their peculiar cultural surroundings, a situation in which their self-interest urges them to look for appearance and mass consumption, rather than for comfort in contentment, as the realities and the aims of life?

Who is quite prepared to speak of human brotherhood, but is at the same time eager to exclude—brother-in-lawhood?

This question leads to another problem. One that concerns all groups of human beings, which are now divided one from the other by caste, race or religion. May not one, or all of these groups decide one day that enforced endogamy is no good anymore? In other words, is the trend towards one world not leading to inter-marriage also between societies so far divided by social law, rather than by instincts or individual inclination?

These are all questions, not easy to answer, yet questions which have got to be answered pretty soon; one of these days, I should say.

In a farm, closely tucked between Australian pines and rolling meadows, on one of the well provided book shelves in the living room, I discovered a copy of Jomo Kenyatta's book *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938). Reading it again was a most revealing experience. Kenyatta studied anthropology in England during the twenties under Malinowski who wrote a foreword to the book. The author knows evidently what he is talking about, in a professional sense, and begins with an account of ancient tribal mythology. He narrates the old Kikuyu, or as he spells it Gikuyu, story which his aged father told him long before there were any signs of unrest in the country, let alone the Mau Mau organization.

Once upon a time, the old man Gikuyu and his wife Moombi had nine daughters. There were no other human beings in this world and the nine girls had no husbands. Gikuyu took this to heart. Under a sacred tree facing Mount Kenya, he prayed to God that there may be husbands for his daughters. God heard Gikuyu and taught him how to burn the sacrificial fires and how to pray in the proper way for those nine husbands. When this was all done, nine young men turned up, asking for the nine daughters as their wives. Gikuyu's answer was that he would give his consent to the marriages

only if the men agreed to settle around the parental homestead of his wife and himself "under a matriarchal system." Later on, Moombi and Gikuyu died. The nine daughters inherited all property. Every one of the girls became the mother of numerous children, boys and girls, known by their respective mothers' names: Acheere, Agachiko, Airimo, Amboi, Angare, Anjirò, Angoi, Ethaga and Aitherando. Nine exogamous clans were formed in that way because no marriage could be contracted between descendants of the same ancestral sister. Members of all the clans, however, were still called *Rorere rwa Mbari ya Moombi*—the children of Moombi. They and their progeny continued in a similar fashion until the males of the tribe began to dislike the rule of women. They plotted a change in the social system and finally decided on a surprise revolution. At one fixed time, all the conspirators who were married to leading women of the community, began to court their wives and succeeded in preparing all of them simultaneously for the role of mothers!

When the women had reached the eighth month and were unable to fight, the men staged their revolution. They deprived women of their offices and then ruled that henceforth sons, not daughters, should inherit the property of their parents. It was also decided that girls at marriage should shift over to their husbands' houses, instead of *vice versa*, as before. Men also proposed that the name of the entire tribe should be changed from the mother's name Moombi into that of the father, Gikuyu. They also wanted to substitute the old female clan designations by the names of the then leading men.

The first two of these proposed innovations were carried through. Women lost their inheritance rights and the tribe was ever since named after Gikuyu. However, when it came to changing the traditional clan names, women got infuriated and decided against the planned renaming which they considered as a sacrilege. They declared that if this change should be forced upon them, they would in future refuse to bear children (Kenyatta, 1938:7). Only on this point, women carried the day and the most important Kikuyu clans are still known by the names of the nine ancestral sisters. All other privileges were taken from the women and the Gikuyu, or Kikuyu, tribe turned thoroughly patrilineal and also patriarchal, *i.e.*, governed by the father's rule, rather than the mother's.

Kenyatta's book has been criticized as propaganda, especially

the chapters dealing with land tenure and the political system, topics directly concerned with land distribution and administration in Kenya. The work was even quoted before the court, in an attempt to indict the author of connections with the Mau Mau Rebellion and oath-taking.

However this may have been, there is no reason to doubt that the tribal legend, testifying to a matrilineal origin of the Kikuyu is correctly re-stated and that the Kikuyu had in fact once been organized in a matrilineal social system. This is indeed the conclusion at which western anthropologists also arrived from their own studies (Leakey, 1958).

Every shift from matriliney to patriliney reduces the female position even below the level which old-established patriarchs allotted to them. The most surprising thing in this frequently repeated social process is the eagerness of most women in such disintegrating matrilineal systems to submit themselves to the new masculine order. They seem to hail it almost as enthusiastically as people copy these days new dress fashions all over the world. Women accept the loss of their own former might and security as though it was just "old fashioned."

I had often noticed that Kikuyu women have an exceptionally hard time—scarcely paralleled in any other Bantu tribe anywhere else in East Africa. Everybody seemed to agree on this point; even the White settlers. A tall Jaluo in an office spoke about the Kikuyu girls as enduring hardships which his own tribal sisters would never have tolerated. A European farmer told me that he measured once the head-loads which Kikuyu women carried over a steep incline of 3,000 feet behind his farmyard. They weighed from hundred to hundred twenty five pounds and were brought from seven miles away.

"It wasn't me, but their men who made them work that way," he added.

Kikuyu men are also hard-working people, accustomed to a difficult kind of life. Still they take it a bit easier than all that. This little detail of observation made me remember the proverb which I had once learned, when on field-work among the Khasi in Central Assam. The Khasi are sturdy, Mongoloid peasant folk, organized in a matrilineal system of society. Women, though much smaller than their Kikuyu sisters, are also accustomed to hard work and often carry heavy loads of pan leaf and areca nut to the markets

where they trade as independent family-heads on their own, or their children's account. Yet the maxim was:

kaba khia—ia u shynrang:

kaba sting—ia ka kynthei

[That what is heavy—for the man; (and) that what is light—for the woman]

Carrying heavy loads is only one, perhaps visually impressive sign for a more generally difficult position of the Kikuyu women. Their particularly hard lot is often linked with a peculiar, and in East Africa, almost unique tribal custom: clitoridectomy which is practised during the girl's initiation. The two things have to be differentiated. Youth initiation as such is an almost general feature in East Africa, if not in the whole continent south of the Sahara. We shall see later that it is an integrant factor of traditional education, and that it has in far away Tanganyika such an importance that even the missions recognised its character-building quality, and did not try to abolish it altogether. Most initiation rituals are, among the East African Bantus, connected with circumcision for boys and sometimes also for girls; a *comparatively* slight operation. The case of clitoridectomy, *i.e.*, the resection of the clitoris, as practised among the Kikuyu, however, is a very different matter. It is not only painful in the extreme, but it also has lasting consequences on which opinion is divided. Infections and morbid growth may ensue, leading to diseases, if not death, and impeding especially the first delivery. Moreover, clitoridectomy is often held to render the operated girl incapable of achieving sexual satisfaction, though popular opinion among Kikuyu males here is at variance in asserting that it would be quite impossible to satisfy sexually an unoperated Kikuyu woman, and thus to keep her in the husband's house. Over this difference of opinion a rift ensued between the protestant medical missions where many European women work, and even Christian Kikuyus. The former felt that it was their duty to prohibit clitoridectomy; the latter, very characteristically also including Kikuyu women and girls, insisted upon it.

An almost unique situation was the result of this ideological struggle. To understand its significance, one has to bear in mind that for the Kikuyus the Spartan treatment inflicted on their girls

assumed the significance of a heroic achievement, a national symbol. It marks them off from most other Africans nearly as much as from the immigrant races, European and Asian. The missionaries who, as I found among matrilineal tribes of Tanganyika, are generally eager to exclude all references to sex, sex education, or dances of sexual character from initiation ceremonies, tried here to abolish clitoridectomy on the ground that, among other things, it disables women sexually. But in this case it was the African who stood for the denial of the flesh. Kikuyu revivalists defended this puritanical ideal, and heroically, if somewhat drastically, pursued the mortification of the body. The controversy over this particular point added in no small measure to the popularity of nativistic national Kikuyu churches within Christianity as they supported the continuation of the operation. Kikuyu leaders would not budge on the issue. The Mau Mau organization came in on the side of Kikuyu public opinion by co-operating at first with sectarian Christian churches of the national Kikuyu movement. A story which has been told to me by White settlers to illustrate the barbarian character of the Mau Mau, concerned an old European lady who, as a protestant missionary, had prevented initiation ritual and operation being carried out on many of her Kikuyu girl pupils. As a revenge, it was said, a gang of Mau Mau members invaded one night the mission and forcibly operated on the old lady, leaving her to die a most pitiable death.

Mau Mau is a word of uncertain origin for a secret terrorist organization, aimed at ousting European settlers from the country by making life so dangerous and unsafe to them that they would feel obliged to leave. The uprising started with subterranean tremors after the second world war and exploded in autumn 1952. The Mau Mau organization recruited most of its members among the Kikuyus, the largest and most powerful tribe in Kenya, but at no time did the entire tribe participate. However many Kikuyus were sent to concentration camp and it is not a little achievement of the Kenya Government, to have rehabilitated some 78,000 of them. In October 1959, less than a thousand internees were still in camps. Actually far more Kikuyus loyal to Government were cruelly mutilated or killed than Europeans and Asians put together. The British Government was always aware of this situation and declined help from the side of nationalist South Africans, eager to wage a war of exter-

mination against the whole Kikuyu tribe and to introduce openly the *apartheid* ideology in Kenya.

The technique of enlisting members in the secret organization was based on a sequence of seven oaths, of which the first ones were of a general humanitarian and in no way objectionable character. They bound the oath-taker simply to unselfish service in the interest of the Kikuyu community. Higher grades of oaths, however, demanded complete obedience to the orders of the Mau Mau High Command and involved rituals which, in the vast literature on the subject, are generally described as "unprintable" or as "beyond description". One feature of these rituals seems to have been a most cruel manner of killing sheep with the injunction that the adept was to invoke the same death upon himself, should he ever break his oath. Some White settlers were critical of the British Government and of the policy of reclaiming Kikuyu Mau Mau members rather than fighting and exterminating them in open warfare. They claimed that in counter oath-taking which anti-Mau Mau Kikuyus organized with Government approval, similar cruel rituals have been practised in one or the other of the widespread areas affected by the secret organization and its opponents.

However this may have been, the stress on blood, mutilation of bodies, shocking cruelty and, at any rate, the sexual aspect of many oath-taking rites, cannot be completely dissociated from the likewise unique features of Kikuyu girls' initiation.

Kikuyu women hardly ever took an active part in Mau Mau killings, but they were, on the other hand, the worst sufferers among the Mau Mau victims. Whenever the secret organization decided on a punitive expedition against areas loyal to Government or to White employers, a village without many males present used to be selected for the mutilation and killing of women or children. In fact it was this method which finally turned the tide of Kikuyu public opinion against Mau Mau in 1954-55.

Yet it is often said that once a woman decided to join the secret organization, or to participate in oath-taking rituals, it was she who instigated men to particularly cruel forms of killing as for instance the burying alive of opponents.

To say that the betrayal of Moombi through the downfall of her daughters after the Kikuyu male revolution of mythology, has now been avenged in a blood-bath, is perhaps a somewhat melodramatic way of putting things. However, it can hardly be doubted that there are, after all, connections between the past, the present and also the future of all cultures, even though we may be unaware of such connections.

If we look at things from this point of view, we see that the historical fate of Kikuyu women has been just the reverse of the experience which their European *petite bourgeoisie* sisters made. Whilst the latter were brought by chance to Africa and into the position of princesses, if not chieftainesses, the daughters of Moombi had fallen from just that level in their own culture, into the position of a de-throned aristocracy—even further—into the position of slaves, slaves first of their own men, and then of the foreigners. Could Kikuyu women remain untouched by this background of their downfall any more than the White women are in their unexpected social ascent?

None of these changes are very happy culture settings. Obviously they are not ideal situations for the coming together of two different civilizations which have met and cannot escape influencing each other, even if they do not yet constitute elements of a fusion which is bound to come one day.

Yet—changes in the functions of women are factors in that part of our experience which we call *culture change* and they will shape the future.

Kikuyu future, European future, Asian future—All human future.

4. *The Makonde Plateau*

THE Land-Rover stops with a jerk. In front of us are two trees, intertwining their branches. The possibility of motoring ends here. The African driver helps to unload tent and camp equipment: folding table, chair, bedstead, bath tub and mosquito-net frame. Half a dozen Makonde peasants have heard the buzz of the engine and gather around. The driver explains that I have come to the plateau for a study of the past history and present progress of their clans, to one of which he himself belongs.

Amused laughter and a few high-pitched exclamations of astonishment accompany the work of setting up the tent. First comes the outer canvas, supposed to keep it cool and dry in sunshine and rain. Then comes the inner tent. This is mounted on the same aluminium poles, but pinned to the ground with another set of wooden pegs. As these are driven into the sandy soil with a hammer, first smiles are exchanged and contacts established.

The Land-Rover turns, half covered by gently waving grass.

"*Kwa heri !*" (Good-bye). Sputtering, the car disappears behind a curtain of living foliage. The high grass closes in over its trail. This is another world, far removed from the one which has just left us with the noisy machine. Suddenly I notice how quiet it is. There is only the crooning of pigeons.

Anthropological field work may now start. It takes in everything—each human problem—between birth and death. So we settle down to make ourselves comfortable. A fire-place is the first thing. Without it, there is no food and no home. My assistant points to one of the two trees which overshadow the tent. It would make a handy open-air kitchen all right, but the dry canvas seems too near the unpredictable sparks and too close also will be the flies which buzz around everything eatable. So we put under another tree, three stone-hard porous lumps which were part of a deserted termite hill which will now form our hearth. The cooking will be simple: steamed cassava roots, half-boiled eggs with butter, jam and coffee from tins for breakfast; and for the two other meals; maize—

or cassava—flour porridge, with *mchicha*—a delicious kind of bush spinach. And a cup of cocoa and condensed milk at night.

After the first, somewhat late, afternoon meal, the shadows begin to stretch towards the south and setting rays of the sun enter the ante-room and the open door of the tent. I have foolishly faced it north-west. This would have been reasonable enough in India or anywhere else in the northern hemisphere, where the sun stands to the south, but not here! How thoughtlessly we stick to tradition, where it simply does not fit! To escape the evil consequences of my traditionalism, I set out for an afternoon walk, scarcely aware that in this again I am following another established custom!

Many criss-cross paths of dry sand lead out through the velvety grass. Which to take? Hieroglyphs—these curves and angles which human feet have etched in the silently moving grass cover. The sand feels clean and soft between the toes of my bare feet. It is sand from the sea, which our planet's contraction has pushed up and made into these steep-sided *inselbergs* of East Africa, along the vast ocean between three lands, India, Arabia, Africa, and the ice of the Antarctic.

Right on top of the plateau are smooth pebbles. The work of sea waves. Not of rivers, much less of glaciers in past periods. There is no water on the dry, sandy ridge. No water of any kind, except during the occasional torrential rains, which soon filter into the sand as though it were a giant sponge—thirsty for the sea from which it has been thrown up. Yet, this plateau is fertile, as long as there is sufficient rain. Grasses, shrubs and giant trees suck up the riches which the sea has left behind and bring them forth under another blue expanse: the sky of Africa.

I take a straight path, leading, as it appears, up to some near-by habitation. There are more homesteads hidden in this thick Makonde bush than one would suspect. I follow the path swiftly, for I am happy to work on this *inselberg* and its industrious folk, the Wa-Makonde—matrilineal peasants of Southern Tanganyika (Map I, p. 8).

I had not waited long in Kenya. Readily the Government of Tanganyika Territory had agreed to my plan of studies in Newala

District as the moment was considered opportune. A progressive Government policy and technology combined in bringing about a great change in Makonde economy. It was for the anthropologist to analyse the effects of this change on the social structure of the area and its other implications.

For the older explorers such as Dr. Karl Weule, a German, who travelled and explored the place at the beginning of the century, or Lyndon Harris during the first years of his career, the word "Makonde" was inseparably associated with the *ndonya*, a round disk made of white wood which women wore inserted in their lips. The small plugs, at first placed into the lips, were from time to time replaced by increasingly bigger ones until they were the size of a saucer or of a small child's palm. I still could see a few elders with *ndonyas*. Those ornaments do not help to make eating and speaking easy. They give a woman's face some resemblance to the profile of a duck, and their origin is one of the many riddles which anthropology will perhaps never solve. Popular European opinion interpreted the *ndonya* ethnocentrically enough as an attempt on the part of Makonde men to protect their daughters and wives from slave-traders, by making them so repulsively ugly that nobody would bother to ask for them. In actual fact, the lip-plug, far from disfiguring a woman in the eyes of a Mu-Makonde, was considered as a fashionable and highly attractive ornament. Elderly Makonde gentlemen still told me with the wistful smile of well-remembered youthful days, how they used to admire a nice white disk on the lip of a pretty girl . . .

The Wa-Makonde undoubtedly suffered much from slave-raiders and other aggressors during the 19th century. Along with the likewise matrilineal Yao, Makua, and Mwera tribes, they were driven away by the warlike and patriarchal Wa-Ngoni from Portuguese East Africa, Nyasaland and perhaps also from areas still further west in the "matrilineal belt", to Southern Tanganyika. This was just about half a century before the Arab and European penetration between 1860 and 1870. Since that time Makonde slaves, and later labourers, spread all over Tanganyika and even into Kenya and Zanzibar, so that the tribal name is used for various groups, ethnically perhaps in no way connected with the actual Plateau Makonde of the present Newala District. Both sexes wear their frizzy hair short cropped as most Tanganyikans do.

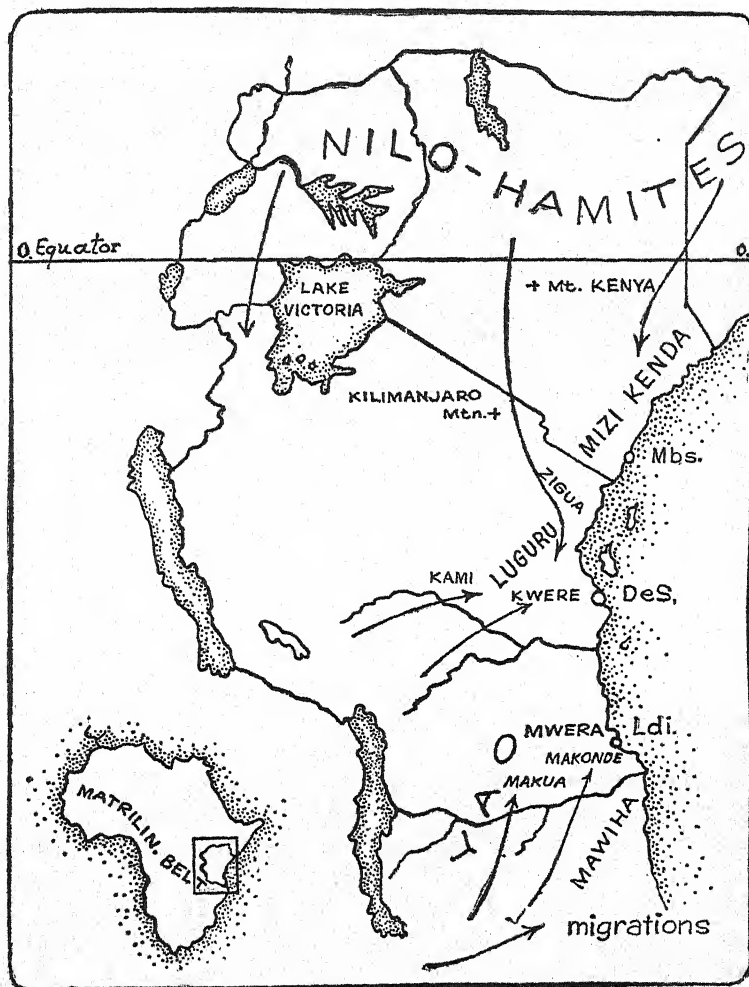


Fig 3, Map II
NILO-HAMITE AND MATRILINEAL GROUPS
IN EAST AFRICA

shown in their approximate present situation,
arrows indicating the course of past migrations.

The Miji Kenda on the Kenya coast (ch. I) came from the north. The Yao group in Southern Tanganyika with the Makonde (ch. IV and V), the Mwera (ch. VI) and Mawiha tribes (ch. XI) have immigrated from the south and south-west. The Luguru group in Eastern Tanganyika (west of Dar-es-Salaam) comprises various clans with different migrations from south and north (ch. VII).

Otherwise the Wa-Makonde differ by being of somewhat less than average height, though they are sturdy and hard-working agriculturists. In this, as in their democratic tribal organization, without paramount chiefs, they resemble their Bantu cousins, the Kikuyu, in far-away Kenya, north of the equator. There can be little doubt that the Makonde northward migration towards the equator was the result of aggression from the south, from the Wa-Ngoni, who were related to the Zulu Bantus in the present South African Union. Tribal legend, however, dramatizes history in a different way (*cf.* Map II, p. 49).

It transplants the scene of migration to the Makonde Plateau itself. In those days it was uninhabited and covered only with the thick Makonde bush, as with an impenetrable curtain. There were towering trees, crooning pigeons and colourful birds, but no humans at all. Near the present bazaar and the *duka* station of Mahuta, the Makonde legend says, out from the bush a man came. He lived an unusual life. He drank and ate very little and did not care for his looks. He did not bathe. He did not crop his frizzy hair. He only carved a human figure from the wood of a special tree. When the carving was done, he went for the night to his hermitage. There he sat the figure out—upright. It was the figure of a woman. The next day, the woman had come to life and he took her for his wife. Both went down into the valley of the Ruvuma River. It was so hot and so sticky that they washed themselves in the water of the river and a child was born. But it had no life and the parents were sad. They went to the Embunkuru valley. There another child was born but soon died. Then the parents returned to the Makonde bush on the plateau. There a third was born and lived. It was hale and hearty. It became the first of a great number. Parents and children called themselves Wa-Matonda and were the ancestors of today's Wa-Makonde. Before the old man died, he told his children and childrens' children to bury their dead upright, just as their mother had come to life, when he had placed her wooden image upright in his hermitage. He also warned his descendants against settling ever in river valleys or anywhere else near water.

The deeper meaning of this tribal legend lies no doubt in the nature of the mysterious ascetic who had the power to bring the carved figure of a woman to life by making it stand upright in his

lonely abode. The meaning of his advice, not to settle anywhere near water, however, can only be understood by one who knows the peculiar water conditions of the area.

Separated from the surrounding plains by a brick-red escarpment of a thousand feet eroded ground, the Makonde Plateau towers over the swampy Ruvuma and the narrow Lukuledi valleys at only two hundred feet above sea level. It is an impressive, flat, trapezoidal mound of 45 miles by 50, about two thousand five hundred feet high in the north and slightly declining towards the coast in the south-east. There is only one damp region on the table land—the Kitangari depression. The Makonde Plateau, like other *inselbergs* along the East African coast, is a high sandy ridge, thrown up from the bottom of the sea in the shrinking process of the earth. The porous ground of the ocean, now on the hill top, does not hold rain water which is rapidly absorbed into the table land, but gushes forth, as clear springs, down in the plains at the edge of the Ruvuma and Lukuledi rivers. In spite of this orographically unusual situation, the sandy soil is rich and the wooded hills still attract during the hot season from November to April about 35 inches rain *per annum*. So far this has been enough to support a population of almost 180,000 people, a population which has tripled since 1921/22 when it was estimated at less than 60,000 souls, who on their part might have descended from only a handful of immigrants, back in the first years of the 19th century. Almost 90 per cent of the plateau inhabitants are Wa-Makonde.

The method of agriculture is a simple form of shifting cultivation combined with bush fallow which was secure as long as it could keep the old double cycle pattern with a secondary regeneration period of 15 to 25 years. Now, however, the cycles have been reduced to nine, sometimes even six years of secondary fallow periods for soil recovery; a dangerous measure, necessitated by the rapid population increase (Gillman, 1945: 34). Under the old system vegetation thrived, though animal husbandry, beyond the keeping of chickens and pigs, was impossible owing to lack of water, the supply of which even for the barest necessities of human needs was one of the main problems in Makonde daily life.

Rain water was carefully collected in shallow ditches under the eaves of grass-thatched roofs and generally sufficed during the rainy season, though it was neither very clear nor ample. But when

the rains failed for a few days, and at any rate during the dry south-equatorial winter from May to September, water had to be taken from the springs in the plains and carried, first over the steep thousand-feet escarpment to the edge of the plateau, and then to the houses at one to five miles distance. Bands of villagers, mostly though not exclusively women and children, used to spend one out of five or six days carrying up drinking water in gourds. It took time and exertion, but it was also fun because every trip to the springs meant company, gossiping and a good, leisurely bath in the dark-green shade which giant trees spread over the clear ponds. The periodically repeated trips to the plains, apart from offering the opportunity for a healthy bath and a break in the monotony of bush life, kept the people also amazingly fit. An energetic young man in charge of the Makonde Water Corporation described to me his frustration when, during surveying work for the water pumping scheme, he was once resting, panting rather heavily at the edge of the escarpment which he had just climbed without any load, when a Makonde lady of about seventy years, with *ndonyas* in her beak-like elongated lips and two heavy gourds of water dangling from a pole over her shoulders, passed him with a friendly, but by no means panting:

“*Habari Bwana?*” (What news, Master?)

The Makonde Water Corporation has meanwhile become a reality, and drinking water is being pumped to an ever increasing number of Corporation water kiosks, like silvery dots all over the area. Could an anthropologist have wished for a more attractive task than studying the effects of the great changes brought about by technology and benevolent organization on people in general, and on the women of a matrilineal society in particular? The first part of my research project, that is to say the general effects of the water pumping scheme, occupied certainly a greater place in the minds of the local administrators than the second, *viz.*, its impact on matriliney. However, the district officers also realized the presence of mother-right as a problem. They made me feel at home when I climbed the stone-cut stairs to the D.C's (District Commissioner's) Office of Newala. I felt at home not only in the metaphorical sense of the word. The welcome was so cordial, information so competent and

hospitality in the D.C.'s own family home so natural that the entire surroundings took for me almost the colour of childhood reminiscences. It was January, the equivalent of July on the northern hemisphere, and everything looked like rural Austria of by-gone days, before automobile and tractor had changed the scenery. The *boma* was built before the first world war by the Germans in the style of a mediaeval fortress such as the one in which I was brought up. A glorious view unrolled itself before my eyes: the red precipice of the escarpment in the foreground, dark-green forests, seemingly unlimited, and in between them the silvery ribbon of the River Ruvuma—the border between British and Portuguese East Africa. Above all, the towering summer clouds of a clear, hot day.

After a long talk about the Makonde Water Corporation, its history since September 1954 and its importance, my special concern with mother-right in East Africa also cropped up:

"We hope you will give us a picture of Makonde matriliney," I was told. "We do not know much about it. Beyond the fact that we sometimes have to decide that the father, rather than the *mjomba*, the maternal uncle, is the proper person to pay school fees for a boy."

Before starting actual field-work, I spent a few days in Newala, where I heard some interpretations of matriliney which, to an anthropologist, were not without a touch of humour. A mission Reverend, for instance, ventured on a so far novel theory to explain the origin of mother-right. To him it was the outcome and consequence of polygyny which he, of course, fought as a major evil in savagery:

"When a man has so many wives, each with a bunch of lively kids, he just can't manage them all. Naturally he calls in his wives' brothers, asking them for help. Naturally they take advantage and discipline their sisters' children as though they were fathers in the house. Hence the maternal uncle's power in matriliney."

Perhaps the elderly gentleman read doubts in my face, however much I tried to keep an eagerly attentive smile... At any rate, he elaborated his points.

"When I first came to the Makonde Plateau—a long time ago—it was still under the Germans. The *mjomba* everywhere played the first fiddle. Now we have Christian schools and over a third of

the population in this district is Christian. The father is more and more recognized as the head of the family, because Christians are supposed to look after the children of one wife only and this they can do without outside help. At least now school fees are being paid by the father instead of the uncle. The lion's share of the bride-price also goes now to the father of a married girl at least among Christians. But Muslim fathers learn from them and since recently demand a bigger share in the bride-price which their daughters fetch."

The irony of this is that to the matrilineal family-concept, a maternal uncle is of course the closest male relative for a child, by virtue of his descent from the same matriline which he has in common with the mother—*i.e.*, his sister. The father, belonging to another matrilineage, is legally an outsider however close he may be psychologically by virtue of his biological relations to the children and his emotional ties to their mother.

I had to start field-work somewhere. A place as remote from modern technology, motor-roads and Indian *dukas* as possible would give me a basic idea against which comparisons could then be made. That is how I came to pitch my tent in this lonely part of the plateau and, on my first afternoon here, started for a walk.

My footpath takes a curve round an exceptionally tall tree—not yet cut down in this region of lesser population pressure. Its stem is about the size of an average Makonde house. Its trunk shoots up straight to the height of a three-storeyed building and then only spreads out into a cupola of branches, each of which would make a powerful tree in the forests of my native land.

"What a wonderful sacred dome!" My thoughts seem almost as loud as spoken words. I pause for a while to look up and pass on. The straight path curls upward into a criss-cross of angles and curves like a pre-historic wedge script which I cannot read—illegible signs, or a writing without meaning? I go on, my thoughts dwelling on the leafy canopy of that tall tree, high up in the evening sky:

"Perhaps," these thoughts go on saying to me, "this is one of the sacred trees. Those under which the Makonde headmen of each matrilineal clan used to light a fire by friction after the harvest.

Then a few grains and little mounds of flour would be laid under the tree, as a token of gratitude to *Mungu*—the great, good God. After this, embers would be taken to every homestead of the clan to rekindle the flame of the God there. Has this ritual been observed here? Perhaps even so late as the first years of the German occupation, before the Maji-Maji Rebellion in 1905?"

"Maybe," comes back the answer to my questions. Maybe, but what does it matter any more? For long the Wa-Makonde have been told, and now believe, that this was just another of their savage, pagan, irreligious customs which was *chenzi* and had to be stopped! To-day instead, donations in money may be made for the new cathedral which is being built in town and the poll-tax may be paid more regularly to the paternalistic Government which has just brought drinking water to the Makonde Plateau. This is far more important now than these old trees which no longer fulfil any social function in the people's present lives. Most trees of this kind have been cut down anyway, and sold as timber—even where the mission fathers did not expressly order this.

"Through observation of these trees I won't get any nearer the Makonde social structure . . ." I repeat to myself and try to pick up the lost thread of the working programme I had been thinking out when I started my afternoon walk.

The foothpath turns and twists. Will I find my way back to the tent before dark? The even thud of two wooden pestles pounding cassava roots, pierces the thick wall of the bush. This is evening work all over the Makonde plateau and almost all over Africa. Hardly different is the rhythm of the pigeons crooning their persistent question—asked a hundred million times by uncounted little winged beings all over this vast, rolling continent. My thoughts go off, instead of turning back to the working programme—go off, far beyond space and time, and transcend the winding footpath through the thickness of the bush. Walking, as I do, in its encirclement, I suddenly feel as though the past has come near and grown crystal-clear. Now I can almost hear the dreamy, sweet crooning of the European doves on a late summer afternoon, which was taken to be a symbol of affectionate love. Yet another distant memory superimposes itself: my first hearing of Indian turtle-doves in the Moti Masjid at Delhi Fort, more like this, yet somewhat different again in rhythm and tone coloration:

"*Al-Haq ul-Haq, Al-Haq ul-Haq*" (The Law of God, the Law of God), their crooning has been interpreted to me. But now the repeated call I hear sounds more questioning, more enigmatic than those of either India or Europe. What do the people of Africa read into this incessant rhythm? However much I ask and try to find out, the only answer I receive would be:

"We do not know. The old maternal uncles and fathers are no more. They were *pagani*. They could have told. But we? We do not know anymore." So the turtle-doves' rhyme remains a question, a hesitant question, first slow and then repeated at ever faster intervals:

"Why . . . why . . . why — why, why, why?"

I go on, listening half absent-mindedly, until suddenly I stop, catching my breath. Who is looking at me, who—from the dense Makonde bush? I hesitate to open the wall of leaves and white thorns, for a leopard or a pride of lions might take it amiss if I peep into their privacy. Irresolutely, I go on staring at the bush and suddenly see . . . two white flower buds, about the size of human eyes and at the same distance one from the other. They must have opened up just now and, spreading their white petals, reveal the two flames of round gold at their centres. Silent eyes. They look not at, but, perhaps, through me.

Following their direction I glance up and instinctively turn round to find myself staring at the cupola of the big tree behind me, high above the narrow footpath through the dense bush.

There it towers. Quiet and yet full of a life almost invisible in its movement. This functionally so utterly unimportant tree. Strange!

Finally I move on, up the winding path which must sooner or later lead to some human habitation. My toes dig into the sand which feels soft and clean.

You may walk between these narrow walls of the "Makonde" for hours without seeing more of the horizon than you can from a small fishing boat in a high sea. I have been later in various parts of the plateau. It is like swimming through waves of green, yellow and white undergrowth, starred with the dark blue and velvety black of butterflies or traversed by strange birds with splendid tails three times their length and a metallic glitter around the wings.

Suddenly, I find myself standing at the edge of a neatly swept farmyard: about fifteen meters square of ochre-coloured sand,

carrying two mud-and-grass houses as though in a cupped palm. So it was that Hansel and Gretl must have felt in the big forest—attracted and at the same time scared by the unexpected human habitation.

“*Ho-odi?*” I ask—(May I approach?). And from behind the hut the reply comes in a high-pitched friendly voice :

“*Karibu!*” (Come near !)

Behind the first house stands a cashew tree with leathery leaves. Beneath this a woman and a small girl pound away with their pestles at the cassava roots in a common mortar. This has been cut from a single stem and stands firm on the ground. Seeing me—not only a *Mu-Geni*, a stranger, but a *Mu-Zungu*, a European at that—the woman raises her black *kaniki* cloth from the waist over her breasts, tucking it in under the armpits. This ceremonious behaviour frightens the little girl. She leaves her pestle and hides behind the back door of the second house.

The woman smiles wistfully and wipes a few drops of sweat from her temples. Is she the mother or, maybe, the grandmother of the child? The marks of age do not always tell the same tale among different races. Some Makonde grandmothers have figures like girls, some women faces that look tired beyond their age. I talk a little with this woman, watching her sift cassava flour in a winnowing fan of split bamboo. The child peeps from behind the door, perhaps thinking that this cannot be a real *Mu-Zungu* who, as everybody knows, either eats little African children, or else sends them over the big sea as slaves. We *Wa-Zungu*—Europeans—remain the bogey even though it is long since wars and strange armies came to this land.

Only quite elderly people can still remember the Wa-Ngoni raids, King Mchemba, the Germans in 1888 and finally the great Maji-Maji Rebellion against them in 1905. One of the elders once replied to my questions: “The Wa-Mwera came from Iluru Hill in the north, just as the Wa-Ngoni had come from the south whilst the Wa-Datchi, the *Deutschen* (Germans) had been all over the place. Then the Wa-Mwera said: ‘You Wa-Makonde help us to fight them and you need not pay any more three-shilling poll-tax to the German *boma* in Newala every year, but if you don’t, we will burn your houses and sell your nieces and nephews as slaves!’ So we joined them, inspite of our dislike for war.

The Wa-Datchi then brought big guns and became quite furious. They did not like our children. In this cassava mortar, over there, they pounded three to death. That is why all children run away, as soon as they see you—unless, of course, you show them your little monkey doll, made of cloth. That they see with great pleasure.”

So we came to talk about the present Wa-Zungu:

“You mean the British? They are kind folk, never angry, nor do they beat us with the *kiboko*, the hippo whip of the Wa-Datchi, but it will never be possible to understand their courts and they raise the poll-tax every few years. Now we must pay thirty *shillingis*, instead of the three for the Wa-Datchi . . . !”

“Ah, yes,” I replied, “but such things as the Makonde Water Corporation cost money and it must come from somewhere, mustn’t it?”

Having in mind talks such as this about us Europeans and our “background”, I do not try to lure the child from her hide-out but fall in with the pounding rhythm of the mother, using the girl’s pestle somewhat clumsily. This proves too much for her patience. Prying from the door with an ever longer out-stretched neck, she finally rushes forth, takes the pestle from my hands and shows how the pounding is done properly: first stretch your body full length, whilst raising the pestle with both hands above your head, then bend the spine to a hollow and thrust the chest forward, as though diving from a low spring-board and finally down with the upper part of your body! This pounds the cassava well and without muscular exertion of the arms. It is good exercise for women, incidentally, making for a fine figure and easy births, among other things. I try again and the child laughs when she sees the improvement in my work.

I cuddle the long, egg-shaped head and say: “*Kwa heri!*” (Good-bye!)

“*Asante!*” (Thanks!) comes the polite reply from the woman who, after all, turns out to be the mother, not the grandmother. She looks benevolently astonished at me as I hurry down the foot-path to reach the tent before dark. It is a look of amused wonder, mixed with a questioning regret about life, very much what I used to see, and half feel, when I helped the neighbouring peasants bringing in the first hay, during my school holidays. The present peasant woman’s hair is short-cropped and frizzy and her skin-

colour would rouse curiosity in the Austrian countryside. But, that apart, there is so much identity of temperament. It is almost as though I had known this kindly wondering face, shaping a question on her dry lips, without ever uttering it. I cannot help looking back once more. The woman's eyes are directed towards me, though not at me. She sees something in the direction in which I go—perhaps the towering cupola of the big tree.

I want to say something that is nicer than just "*Kwa heri*". Do something kind, something good. Something that could undo, in this one human soul, what generations of my own people have done here to generations of hers. I try to catch her eyes, but she looks down again and wipes away a drop of sweat from her bony temples. It looks like the mopping of a tear, though it is not. I turn and go on whilst the even rhythm of the two pestles in the hollow mortar gradually merges into the wider, omnipresent rhythm of the turtle doves' ceaselessly repeated, soft crooning :

"Why . . . why . . . why—why, why, why?"

5. *Clan Lands*

THE same approach to anthropological research which I had worked out during years in India, proved successful also on the Makonde Plateau. After settling down in any new place, contacts come most easily with the first person who lends a hand in getting firewood or, may be, *mchicha* and a couple of eggs for the evening meal after arrival. Such kindness suggests a return visit the next morning and if one feels welcome, the first step to friendship is taken.

At Mkonjowano it was Matipa Rajab(u) Mukulukulu's house which I visited in this way. It therefore got the number *one* in my operational village map and I noted that it belonged to the Mwihumbo clan, like the other houses of this neighbourhood, as I found later. It was perhaps not the richest house, nor that of the *jumbe*, the local village headman. But in social anthropology, the most important thing is to find a natural beginning, rather than a systematic approach to the confusing variety of details, each of which may turn out to be significant. Instead of studying the plan of the rectangular house and its three rooms and verandahs, or inquiring about its history and when the original round pattern was changed into the present square one, I was keen on meeting Matipa. When he saw me, he slipped at once two eggs into my hands, not so much for the locally customary ten cents or *heller*, the German word for this small coin still in use, but because he thought that I had come for more eggs. His smile shone under a white Arabic cap. He wore a long *kanzu*. Open around the broad neck, it spread an atmosphere of Near Eastern formality. Matipa bowed politely when I inquired about the meaning of his first name, which was Bantu, and his second, Rajab(u), inherited from his father. I did not have to ask indiscreet questions. He himself pointed to the young woman who was standing and gazing from the entrance into the second room. She was his fourth wife. Her black *kaniki* cloth was tucked in under the armpits, and she held her short-cropped head straight, like a boy, over the well-

shaped, round shoulders. Two little girls and the smaller of two boys clung to her, but Matipa explained that they were children of his three first wives and, naturally, belonged to their respective mothers' clans. I had a bundle of strings in my hands—each leading to another chapter of social anthropology.

Meanwhile politeness demanded the pursuit of the just started inquiry: names also tell tales of their own. Matipa, a Muslim like all but one householder in this neighbourhood, has a Bantu name of non-Arabic origin, a father's name, Rajab(u) of Arabic origin and a grandfather's name, Mukulukulu of Bantu origin. In most other cases, it is the first name which is Arabic, whilst the second or third is more often Bantu, indicating "Pagan" ancestry. Similarly, Magnus, converted to the Roman Church when going to school, joins his Latin personal name with the Arabic Hamisi of his father.

The matrilineal succession of clan names, *i.e.*, in this case, Mwhumbo, contradicts the patrilineal naming pattern for males. For the last two or three generations even a woman is referred to as *Bint(i)*, the Arabic word for *daughter*, joined with her father's name, as for instance Binti Umari, for the daughter of one Umar, instead of being called by her own personal name, or that of her mother. This makes a confused picture for the family genealogies which are such a help to anthropologists in their attempt to understand all the interrelations between individual members of one neighbourhood. From his name I learned that Magnus Hamisi Rajabu, for instance, is a paternal nephew, not a cousin of Matipa Rajabu Mukulukulu, my first friend, and so on.

What is still more important than the confusion caused by joining patronymic personal and matrilineal clan-designations, is the contradiction between patronymic names and matrilocality. The latter means, as in the case of Moombi and her nine daughters in Kikuyu mythology, that a bride-groom settles at marriage on his wife's clan lands and near her family, instead of *vice versa*. This rule of matrilocality (or uxorilocality) does not function throughout the Makonde Plateau as it used to—for reasons which I was about to analyse.

There were eight houses in the immediate Mkonjowano neighbourhood. The house which I called number two belonged to Musa Nambowa, the local jumbe, the headman of this jumbeate. He received forty shillings (about twenty-five rupees) per month from

the Government and had been appointed by the Liwali in Liteho. Even though he had not been born in the neighbourhood, yet he wielded authority by virtue of common matrilineal descent from Chitolo, the Bi Mkubwa—the grand old lady. It took me long checking, many cross-examinations of all the *Wa-Zee*, the village elders, and deletion of previously misunderstood information, to find that this neighbourhood was held together not only by common descent from the old lady Chitolo, but also from five sisters, her grand-daughters.

The most confusing aspect of the story was that each of these five sisters was referred to as Binti Nahaule—daughter of the man Nahaule—which in fact they were though each had a personal name just as their grandmother Chitolo had. But these personal names were no more remembered by most of their descendants in the fifth or sixth generation. Every one spoke of his own Binti Nahaule regardless of the poor anthropologist who for a long time took the five ladies as one.

This situation would appear to give the impression that even in the small, out-of-the-way village Mkonjowano the matrilineal and matrilocal pattern was in complete disintegration, since most elderly male descendants of the Chitolo lineage had succeeded in bringing their wives from other clans to this neighbourhood, thus introducing patrilocal (or virilocal) residence patterns.

In spite of this, the principle of matrilineal clan descent and even residence in the wife's place and clan lands (uxorilocality) is still a living factor on the Makonde Plateau as a whole. The case of Abdullah Fundi illustrates this point (Fig. 4, opp.).

Abdullah Fundi (black-smith) lived in Mtongwele, a Makonde Water Corporation pumping station. When I visited the water works in 1958, he was cultivating two acres of land which did not belong to his Nandala (hunger) clan, but to his first wife Binti Mzee's Munga clan. Having settled uxorilocally at Binti Mzee's place, he had been taken as a relative by the *Wa-Zee*, the elders of her clan. They allowed him to stay on, and cultivate the land even after the divorce of Binti Mzee and her shifting virilocally to her new husband's place. Abdullah Fundi had later married a girl Aminá of a third clan: the Bonde. However, Fatuma, the daughter of the first marriage stayed with her father Abdullah on her mother's clan lands, even after the latter's divorce and departure.

By doing so she conformed to the matrilineal and matrilineal pattern in as much as she belongs to her mother, Binti Mzee's clan, the

Clan Lands

of the

BONDE, MUNGA, & others

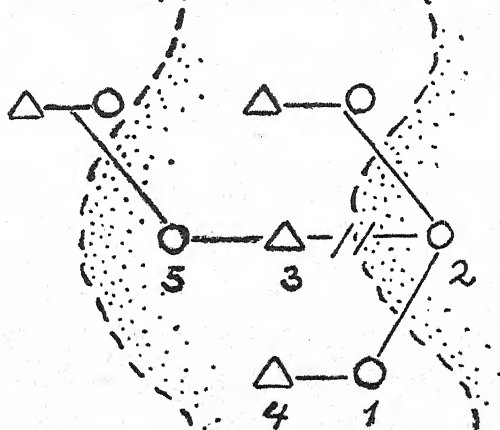


Fig. 4

A MAKONDE GENEALOGY illustrating the opposing principles

of matrilineal residence and patrilineal succession: example Fatuma (1) is called "Binti Abdullah", daughter of Abdullah (3) but lives on the Munga clan lands which she inherited from her mother Binti Mzee (2) although the latter has herself left these ancestral lands following her divorce from Abdullah (3) who lives with his second wife Amina (5) and his daughter Fatuma (1) on the latter's Munga clan lands, with her husband Mhd. Umbili (4).

Munga. However, she also conformed to the patrilineal pattern of staying with her father who, though an outsider from the point of view of clan affinity, is economically and in this case probably

also psychologically closer to her than her mother. In fact Fatuma is to most neighbours Binti Abdullah, the daughter of Abdullah. In this instance, the implications of the family arrangement go one generation—and two anthropologically interesting steps—further. Fatuma Binti Abdullah got married to a young man, called Muhammad Umbili of yet another clan: (Fig. 4, No. 4). The two young people seemed happy enough with their little baby, but should they one day decide to separate, Fatuma would stay on her mother's clan lands along with her father. Her child would then be her traditional heir on these lands, whilst her husband would, if divorced, normally return to his own clan, or else join his next wife on hers.

These two family stories and many others similar in nature led me to conclude :

Firstly: Matriliney is a living force even when and where it is disturbed, or strongly curbed by intruding customs of patrilineal naming patterns or virilocal residence habits.

Secondly: The *Wa-zee* are still quite generous with their clan lands when it comes to allotment for cultivation purposes to husbands or fathers of their clan sisters, or clan daughters. This generosity conforms to tradition which was meaningful in the days of abundant land and a sparse population to cultivate it.

However, today the situation has been reversed. The population has tripled. Land scarcity, soil erosion, deforestation and failing rain are serious threats. Yet the old policy survives and every clan persists in trying to swell its membership. The concepts: "More working hands—more wealth", and, "More warriors—more safety", may have survived subconsciously, though they are out of date. Young men are still being encouraged to join their wives' clan lands in accordance with uxrilocal tradition, whilst at the same time young men are entreated by the elders of their own clans to introduce a virilocal European pattern of marriage and to bring their brides over to their own ancestral lands.

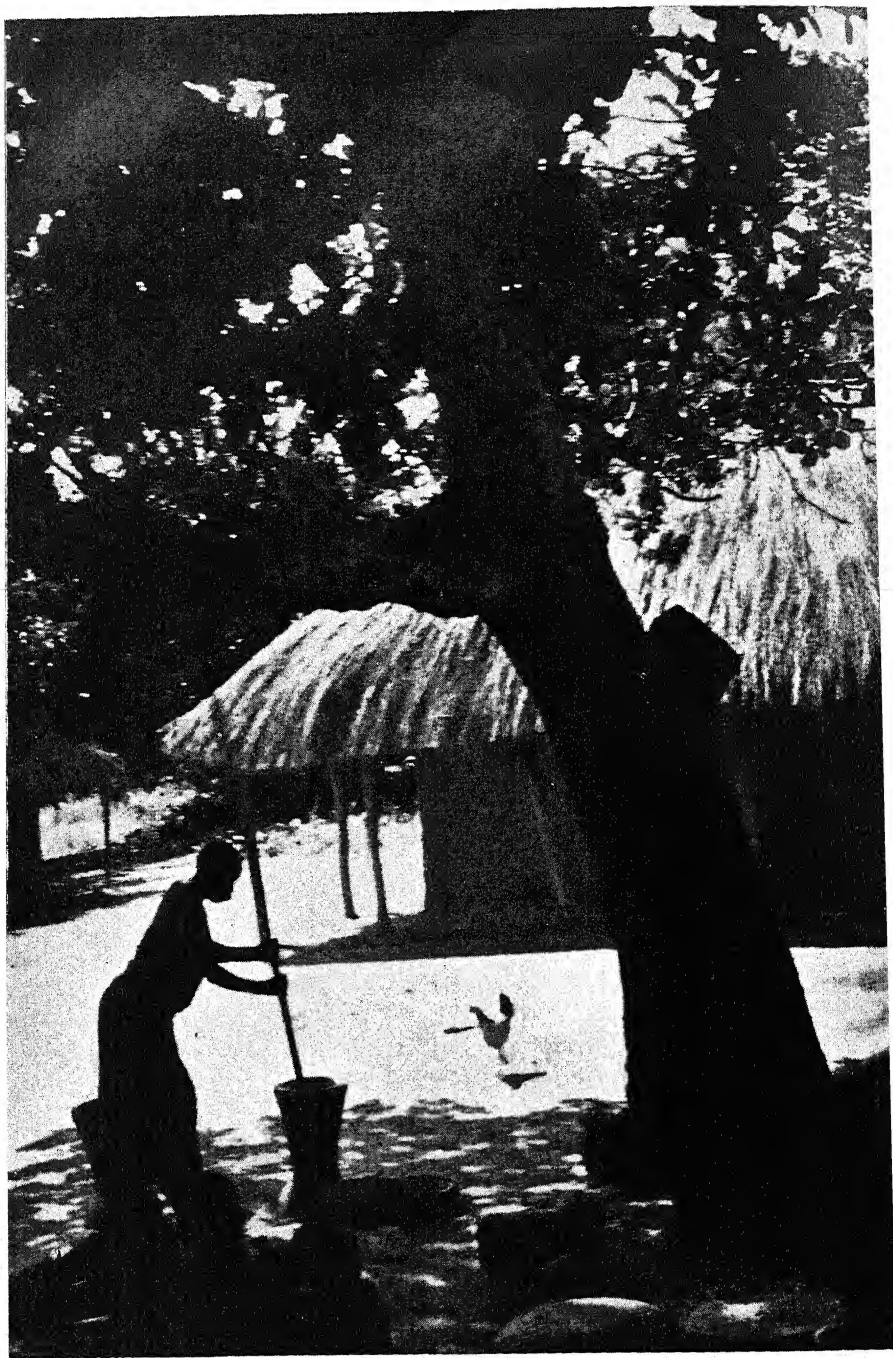
Questions of theoretical and general significance arise here. What is the result of these conflicting tendencies? From where does the rope-pulling stem? From intrinsic necessities created by overpopulation, mechanization, urbanization, or from psychological causes, such as religious conversion, governmental measures,



I

A VILLAGE IN EASTERN UGANDA

Dwellings and store-houses amidst banana groves

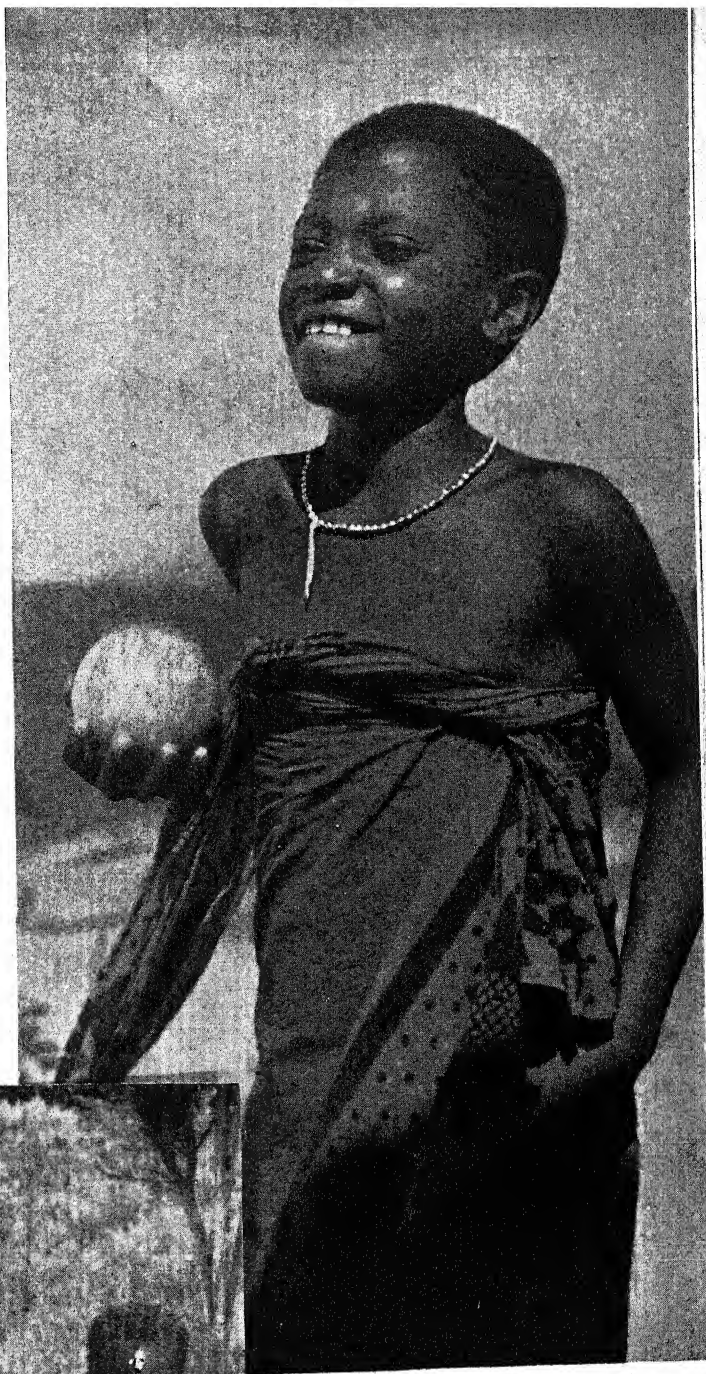


II

EVENING WORK

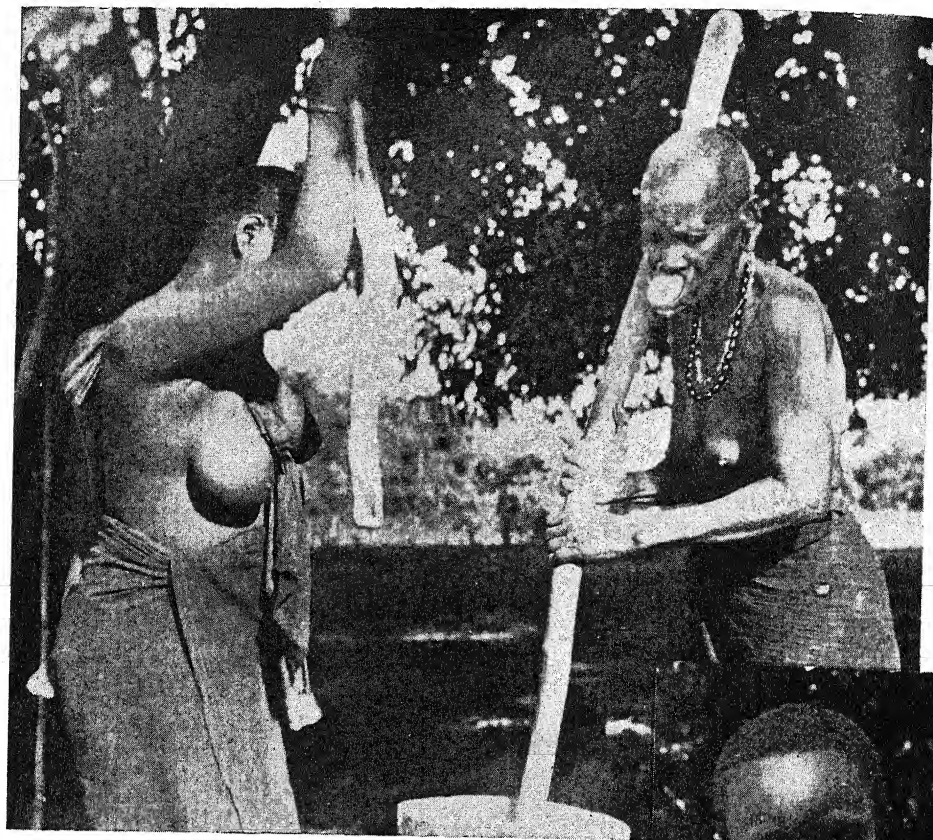
on the Makonde Plateau (Southern Tanganyika)

III (a)
FIRST FRIEND →
on the Makonde
Plateau



III (b)
WA-LUGURU
(Eastern Province,
Tanganyika) ↓





IV (a)

OLD MAKONDE LADIES

can still be seen with the lip plug, an
ornament of their young days, but . . .



... THE YOUNG

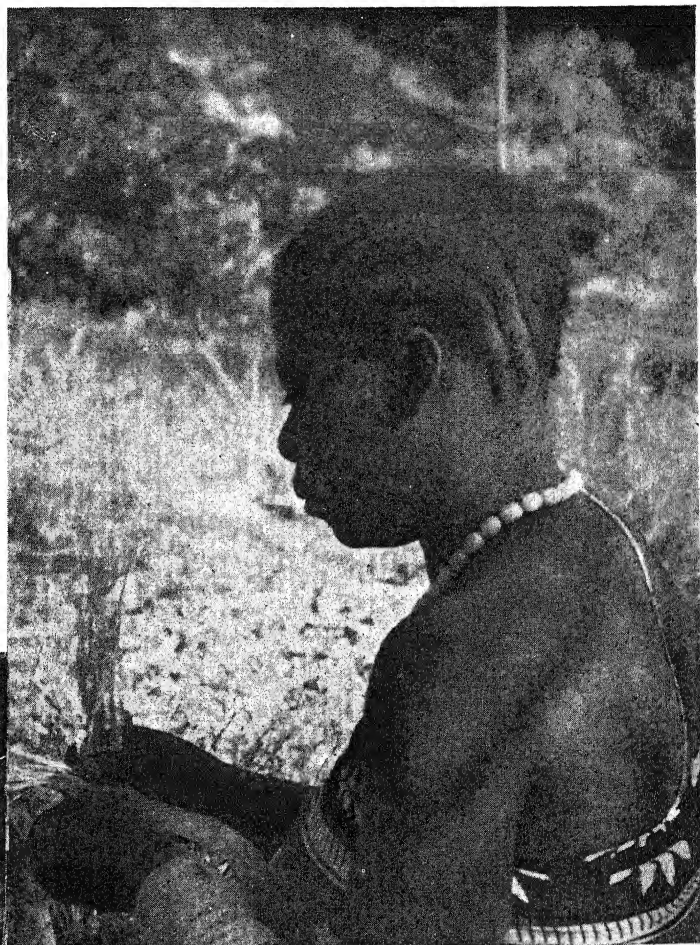
do no more pierce their lips

IV (b)

V (a)

BAMBOO-
MATTING

during an afternoon
chat at Kiperebetu
(Uluguru
Mountains)



V (b)

CASSAVA FLOUR

has been pounded (IV/a) and
is ready for the kitchen



VI (a)
← LUGURU CHILDREN
during a *ngoma*

VI (b)
THE TORN FOREIGN COAT
as symbol of prestige

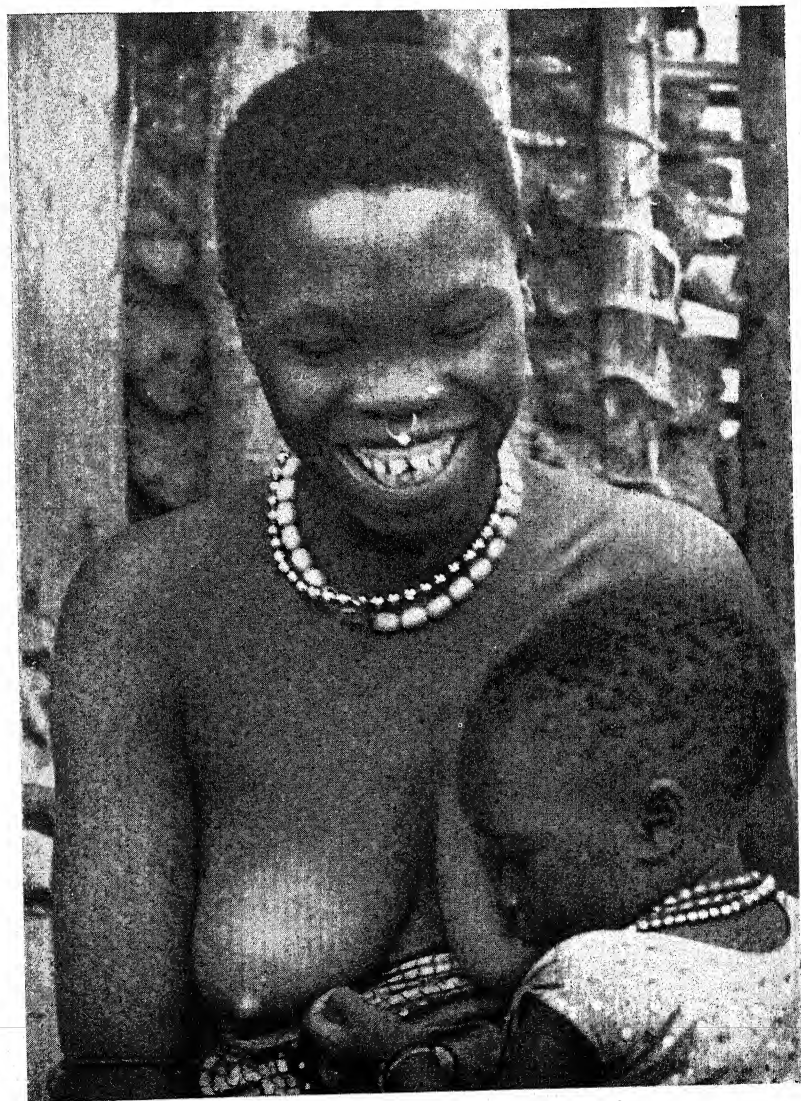


VII

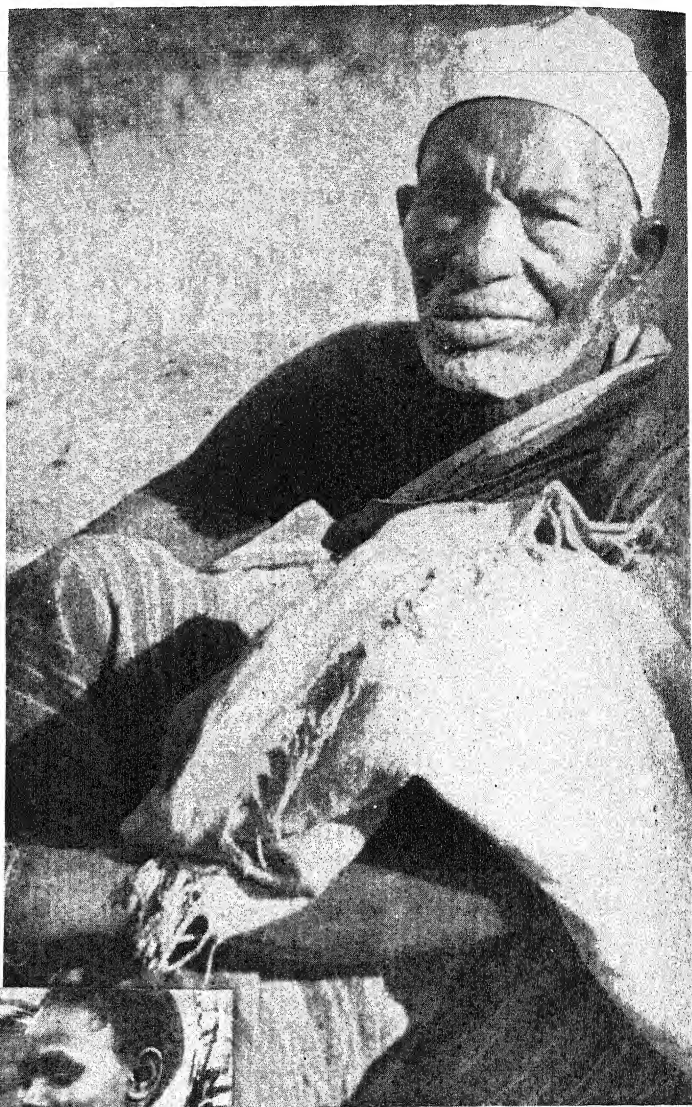
NOSE ORNAMENTS—

rarely seen among the Wa-Luguru

The baby of this visitor to Kiperebetu would have been happier without the sweat-soaked shirt between her and her mother's breast



VIII (a)
MZUMI MWENYE
MWUA
of Kiperebetu



VIII (b)
MUSLIM CHILDREN
in Uganda

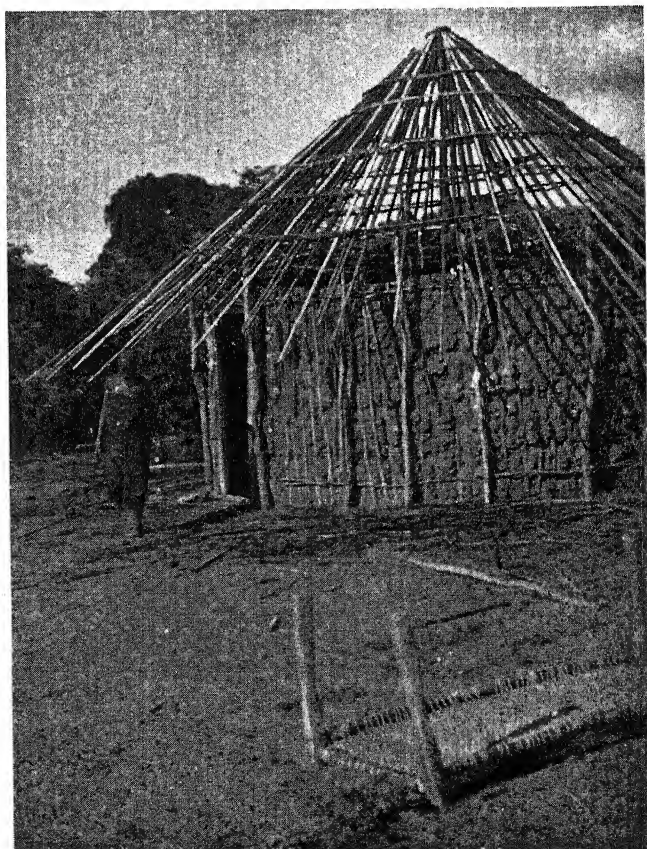


IX (a)

MZUMI'S



round house at
Kiperebetu (No.
VII, sketch map)
and the *mwitu* in the
background (left)

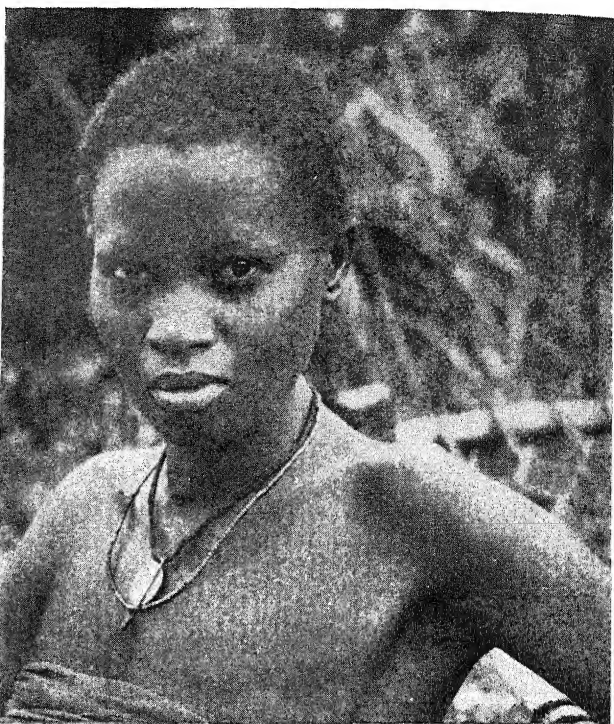


IX (b)

SKELETAL
STRUCTURE

of a house during
building

The walls have
already been filled
in with mud



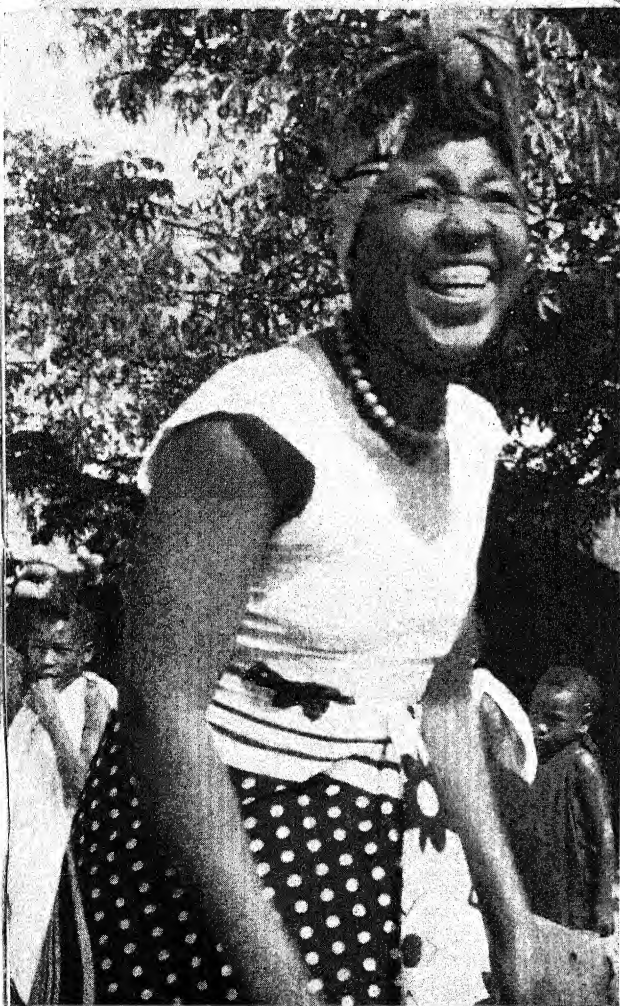
X

LUGURU SISTERS—rather different types



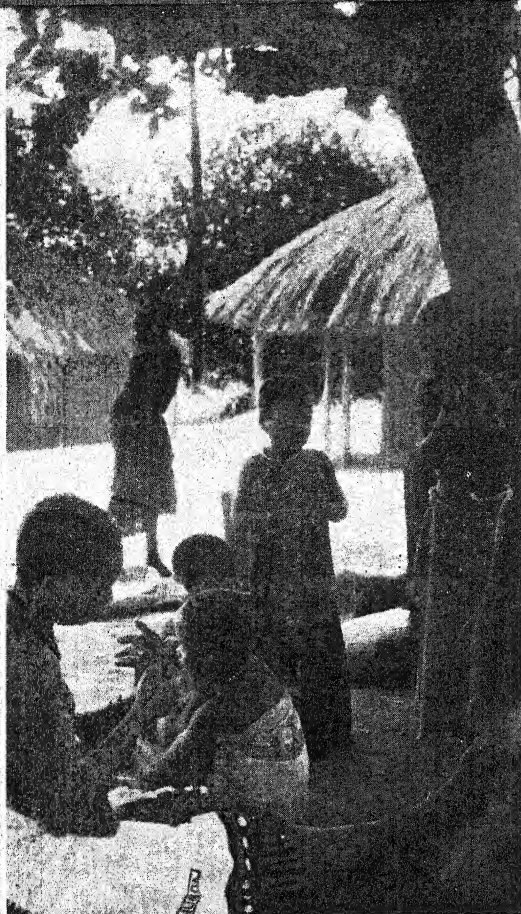
XI (a)

NGOMA—the dance at
Kiperebetu, lead by Habiba
(extreme left) who . . . ↑



. . . passes the camera

← XI (b)



XII (a)
CHILDREN AT HOME

and queueing up for
SCHOOL
XII (b)



example-setting and other forms of propaganda? Are African systems of matriliney truly incompatible with the technology which European domination introduced, or are they considered outmoded just because they are African?

All these questions are inter-related and cannot be answered independently. For clarity's sake, however, it may be helpful to consider them one by one.

What is the result of the rope-pulling between the clans of young couples, each trying to win over a member from the other side? The brief answer is: the bride-price. Only a few years ago marriage payments were unknown among the matrilineal tribes of Tanganyika or consisted of a mere token gift (Whiteley, 1951: 52, 57 ff., 92). But the new custom today spreads with the same rapidity, if perhaps not quite the same viciousness, which it took in other, previously matrilineal areas of West Africa (Marie-André, 1953: 157 ff., 1956: 102, 178 ff.). We have seen how marriage payments and slavery are linked historically, if not functionally, and why they are considered to lower the status and roles of women, even in patrilineal areas like Eastern Uganda where the bride-price is an old established, traditional institution. It is not necessary to elaborate here the effects which newly introduced marriage payments exercise on matrilineal society. Seen functionally, they give the bridegrooms' clans formal justification for virilocality, *i.e.*, the right to take away the brides from their home and clan lands, to settle them in that of their husbands. As an all too often observed result, the young wife is being treated as a "bought slave"—to use the words of the young African woman officer in the Community Development Organization whom I had met in Uganda.

Next question: from where does the rope-pulling between the two clans stem? As the Wa-Makonde were traditionally matrilineal and matrilocal, the tension between the two social principles, matriliney and the opposing patriliney, could develop only after the concepts of patrilineal succession and patrilocal (or virilocal) residence patterns were introduced by outsiders, especially Christian missionaries. We have seen how European opinion on the origin of matrilineal organization missed the point when it accounted for the prominent position of the mother's brother by ascribing it to the plurality of wives and children of husbands unable to discipline them all, when in fact the maternal uncle's importance

in matrilineal families is based on his being a member of the same clan as the mother and on his other ties of affinity to her, as his sister. Small wonder that ordinary outsiders without anthropological understanding overlook under these circumstances the economic security and psychological safety which the matrilineal family structure provides for women. Political administrators, though not committed to the idea of changing social structure and religions of the African peoples, are still inclined to view with distrust, if not bewilderment, such a strange thing (to them) as the *mjumba*, the maternal uncle, as a leading family member, if he is for instance expected to pay the school fees for his nephews and nieces. Naturally this situation cannot be conducive to the appreciation of intrinsic values in African civilizations, much less the matrilineal system as such. Anyhow, the powerful mission organizations with the silent consent of the administration work against it.

In the special situation of Southern Tanganyika there is another party still involved—the Arabs. They hold a religiously sanctified position of authority for the Muslim Wa-Makonde, that is to say, for at least two-thirds of the plateau population as a whole. In East Africa, like in ancient Kerala, Arab immigrants intermarried with local girls, and preached the broad principles of their religion, without trying to change social customs much. Like matrilineal Mappilas in North Malabar, Makonde, Makua, and Yao Muslims follow their traditional order of matrilineal family organization. Similarly, there were few interferences in youth initiations, training, dances and songs of the African people. But once Christian converts are encouraged, by mission fathers, schools and Government officials, to disregard traditional law and to adopt patriliney with virilocal residence rules, the Muslims also come forward, claiming that because the Arabs in Zanzibar, Oman, Cairo or Baghdad are patrilineal, they should as well turn patrilineal now. Their argument is also:—"progress"!

Yet, as we have said, both clans of two newly married people keep trying to persuade their respective members to drag the marriage partner over to their own side, following old tradition in the case of the girl, or following "modern", European ideas in the case of the boy. This is a paradoxical situation in a dangerously overpopulated area where clan elders should be happy

to see young people leaving their already overtaxed clan lands and settling down elsewhere, on the lands of future in-laws. This inconsistency is likely to explode only too soon when the bush fallow will be shortened below the capacity of the soil. Crops will fail, like the rain which is driven away by the ever increasing baldness of the once thickly forested area. But meanwhile the situation is not recognized for what it is and the rope-pulling continues. However, under constantly increasing European influence, the argument that patriliney is modern, progressive, fashionable and hence meritorious, gains ground with ever increasing rapidity. It is the "modern age." "Nobody can stop it." "It is Progress!" . . . "You can't put the clock backwards !!" All arguments favour the patrilineal party in every pair of competing clans. They sound quite convincing if they are for instance illustrated with the story of a bus driver.

Bus driving and earning cash every month is no doubt progressive. One bus driver got a good job at Mtwara, the provincial capital at the foot of the Makonde Plateau and near the old Arab settlement in the Mikindani Bay. His wife used to visit the driver there and he also came up to visit her at the farm on the plateau, whenever he got leave. Later he was transferred to Dar-es-Salaam, far away in the hot north, nearer the equator. There he earned more cash and could pay for the young wife to come and live with him. Should he die or should the couple divorce, the wife can still return to her clan lands. But her little daughter, if brought up and growing in Dar-es-Salaam, will be without roots and without any other security for her future except for her own work when grown-up, or that of her man which is likely to be more profitable.

However, not many Wa-Makonde are bus drivers yet. Still the argument of the bus driver or other wage-earners is also being applied to the average cultivator, and the principle of matriliney is decried as unsuitable to modern life, as old-fashioned, tribal, pagan, primitive—*chenzi*. And that is enough to kill it.

The administration, though justly proud of the great effort and economic success which the Makonde Water Corporation had achieved, was not blind to the growing problems of overpopulation and land scarcity on the plateau, coupled with a fall in the agricul-

tural yield. There were two possible solutions.

Firstly: an increase of production by use of green manure, combined with ridge cultivation on the plateau itself, with high prospects for the first years but the implication of further deforestation and failing monsoons later.

Secondly: the opening-up of the Ruvuma Valley for mechanized rice cultivation. The swampy virgin forests, inhabited by herds of hippopotami and elephants, the broad river-system with its many ramifications, filled with crocodiles, would soon give way to an Americanized type of tractor farming, or in other words to a screaming agricultural factory, based on the principle of co-operative farming which proved so successful among the Chagga, now the richest tribe in Tanganyika, growing coffee around Mount Kilimanjaro.

Either of the two projects, or more probably both, was bound to be resorted to pretty soon. The alarming increase of population and decrease of agricultural production made quick measures imperative. It seemed a matter of months or, at the utmost, of very few years that things would get moving. There was no time to lose. In the near future, plots would be marked out in the valley. Contractors would destroy the tropical rain forest with bull-dozers and plough the virgin soil up with tractors. At the beginning yields would again be stupendous. There would be a rush for land to start with. The highest bidders and the most enterprising young men would stand the best chance of getting an opportunity to make money fast. There was not much time to lose.

I had meanwhile learned something about the effects which the water pumping scheme had brought to Makonde society. Could these observations not be made to serve the next big project? In fact I was expected to put them down on paper.

When I found myself in conversation with British administrative officers and African leaders, I felt their mental attitude towards me almost like a tangible gesture, an invitation to a pleasant agreement. I then remembered my enthusiasm when I heard first that the Makonde Water Corporation was bringing water to a dry and thickly populated plateau. Drinking water! It relieves women from such onerous physical burdens! How eagerly had I made my

plans at Makerere! How impatiently had I not waited in Kenya for the reply from the Government Secretariat in Dar-es-Salaam!

And now? What was I going to say if I wanted to stick to my duty as a conscientious anthropologist? I would have liked to please hospitable and kind men, all the more as they belonged to countries different from mine. These men were willing to listen to me, the stranger, as an expert. Could I take it upon me to disappoint and perhaps antagonize them? Finally I wrote down a "Report" in five parts, saying what I had to say. A few salient points will provide an adequate summary.

Public opinion on the plateau is thoroughly enthusiastic about the pumping scheme. Every neighbourhood clamours for the speedy opening of one more water kiosk in the vicinity. If public opinion on this point is to be taken as the only criterion for judging the pumping scheme, it is surely a roaring success.

The high cost of corporation water, however, was not kept a secret. In fact the administrators and technicians of the Corporation themselves gave me all the relevant data to be compared with my experiences in the field: an old petrol can, a *debbe*, holding about four and a half gallons (twenty litres), costs fifteen cents (nine and a half Naye Payse) at the village kiosk which has to be operated by a local employee whose duties include the collection of water money. This price works out as seventy-five cents (about forty-six Naye Payse) for twenty-two and a half gallons (hundred litres). Ten times the price which the Municipality of Dar-es-Salaam or Nairobi charge for water. It is probably far more than ten times the price charged by most municipalities anywhere between New York and Moscow, London and Peking.

The significance of this can only be understood in terms of Makonde economy. In terms of necessary consumer goods, the plateau cultivators are by no means paupers. They own clean, isolated homesteads. They eat on the whole sufficient though starchy food with little protein, fat and vitamin content. They used to produce themselves all that was needed for a feast: masks, drums, dances and *pombe*, the light country brew. But in terms of cash, there are only few farmers who earn more than three hundred shillings (about two hundred rupees) *per annum*, and this only by cash crops such as cashew-nuts for instance, or if they get an additional Government salary as local jumbes. Yet the Wa-Makonde

eagerly buy the costly water. The wife clamours for the fifteen *hellers* which will buy the daily drinking and cooking water. Calculating that an average family uses the kiosk facilities for six months in a year only, this item alone would amount to more than twenty-seven shillings, *i.e.*, almost ten per cent of a good annual cash income.

It is no longer fashionable to go down the escarpment for enjoying a leisurely bath whilst washing clothes and to bring up water in gourds. But the drain on the family purse is felt. It is out of the question to purchase this expensive water for bathing or washing purposes. Everybody thinks how to make a little extra money either by working for daily wages, or finding some odd job at the Corporation, or with an Indian *dukawallah*. However, it is an extravagant Mu-Makonde who purchases a *debbe* of water for a bath, hardly a big bath at any rate! So bathing is being neglected. On the other hand, there are more and more varieties of cloth for sale in the *dukas*. The spending habit, encouraged by the daily purchase of water, grows more general. More and more money goes into clothing and the effects of this trend are not confined to economics alone. The lure of conspicuous consumption is set and is followed in more than one way. Previously it had been a part of the Makonde value system not to show off with houses or ornaments more prominent than the average. But now costly corporation water and expensive clothing worn on bodies no longer very clean have become prominent items in an average Makonde family budget. The careful analysis of many such verbally reconstructed household accounts revealed that up to seventy-five per cent of the average cash income is being spent on clothing for show, whilst there is increasing protein and vitamin deficiency in the food or, to give another example, there are no warm blankets for the occasionally quite cool nights. This complex problem of clothing will be discussed later, but it is necessary to point out here certain social consequences of the present situation.

Formerly it was mostly the women who supplied a major part of the necessary water by bringing it up from the plains themselves. This essential function in society added an economic significance to their already strong position. Now it is women who demand cash for both: household water and clothing. Men, not women, are generally in a position to supply money for the family economy

by earning outside. In this way women lose their material independence and glide into the situation of ever demanding, if not actually nagging, consumers. This change does not make for an improvement of women's status, which is already being lowered by the permanent pressure on the traditional system of matrilineal family organization, such as missions and foreign opinion generally exercise.

Yet there is still another side of the picture: the saving of labour. All the working hours per man, or woman, which used to be spent for going down the escarpment and taking baths in shadowy ponds . . . what of them? Are they not a mere gain for the economic process as such?

During the rainy season, when agriculture demands heavy work, water comes from the sky, enough even for bathing and washing on an occasional sunny forenoon. But during the cold and dry season from April to September, there was, and still is, not much work to be done on the *shambas*, the cultivated plots. It is the period for *unyago*—the youth-initiation, for dancing, masks and feasts. It did not really matter much then if once in a week or five days one had to go down in good company for water.

And now? Do the people use all the saved hours for either production or any other aspects of "progress"? Is there any gain in all the saved hours?

I could find no evidence to prove it.

When I had to talk on some of these questions to either British administrators or African leaders, I could easily read the disappointment on their faces. They did not want to hear that the social equilibrium of a tribe cannot be measured only by shillings spent or even earned.

"But, my dear fellow" I was told, "what you are complaining of is just what we want. We must make the African money-conscious, ambitious and competitive. More work, more earnings, more purchases! Let him wear five layers of clothing, one from each continent, if he likes. See how much the manufacturers are now investing to put up a shoe plant! How could they, if the African wives did not demand many pairs of shoes from their lazy husbands? Let them first learn to compete, pay dividends to capital and build up industries. They have got to, with an ever-increasing population and us leaving them soon. Progress, my

dear fellow . . . That is the thing: *Progress!*"

A few others, it is true, seemed to listen wistfully to what I was trying to convey and nodded: "I quite see your point, but is it not too late now? It might still have been possible when the Germans came, but see what a mess we ourselves made of Kenya at that time. When Sir Donald Cameron was Governor, in the late 'twenties, the principle of indirect rule was formulated: something of what you seem to have in mind. But now the trend is rather away from it, since Africans want more Europeanization in every respect, more Christianity, more mission fathers, which altogether mean technical skill, specialization, competition and disregard for the 'Native Authority.' It is the young, ambitious African who speeds up this development—not us."

Still I did not give in. Could the experiences and unexpected results of the Makonde Water Corporation not be taken as an example of what harm sudden mechanization may do? Could this harm not be avoided? Avoided in new projects, such as the opening of the Ruvuma Valley for mechanized agriculture? Past mistakes may be turned to future advantages, here as everywhere else in human life.

The idea filled me with hope. Co-operative farming? Is it not predestined to give shape to traditional clan organization? Clan lands have so far not been mapped on the Makonde Plateau. They are only known to the Wa-Zee who decide most internal disputes. Soon an assessment of clan properties will have to be made. If mechanized cultivation has to be introduced into the Ruvuma Valley—could the land then not be allotted to corporate clan ownership, instead of to ambitious individuals? Clan elders could form boards of directors in the management of clan-owned co-operatives, whilst the young men, and in keeping with matrilineal traditions, also women, could very well be employed and paid by the clan property board to function as secretaries, technicians and executives. In this way the equilibrium, the security for wives, daughters and small children generally offered by traditional matriliney, could be saved from the disintegration which propaganda and misunderstandings have so far induced. A happy union of tradition and the latest technology could be effected. There would naturally be the question of financing, a ticklish but by no means an insoluble problem. This hurdle has been overcome

for co-operative enterprise elsewhere in the world.

The organization of corporate ownership would also offer other advantages. A single individual, as agricultural entrepreneur, whether Makonde or from outside, can easily ignore forest laws, transgress protective management regulations, cut trees, exploit the soil to the point of exhaustion and finally disappear without paying either debts or fines. Not so a clan corporation in joint ownership.

The question of keeping forest laws is indeed a serious one. Once the protected forest areas are preyed upon, the vicious circle of climatic changes, failing monsoons, progressive desiccation and more demands on the exhausted soil is set into motion and leads to the same results as in the Sahara, the *Karst* rocks of the Mediterranean Sea, in Iraq, Persia, Pakistan and India . . . For many African peoples also, south of the Sahara, it will be in one or two generations a question of life and death.

Soon Tanganyika will have self-government. Who will think and work for the future generations? Young ambitious men eager to make money quickly and easily? Or groups of clan elders, still rooted in a tradition of tribal democracy, equilibrium and matrilineal balance?

The ends of anthropological threads in my hand kept multiplying. In fact there seemed to be no limit to their number. I could surely not complain about lacking material for work. I sadly reflected upon my old dream of settling in one particular East African tribal area and devoting more of my life—to the study of present problems which had been created by the rapid culture-change. I compared the immensity of these problems with the short time left before me. It was April. By October I had to be back in my University at Madras. Only six more months. Enough to collect material and raise some crucial points of more than local significance. Not enough, though, to complete my analysis as I would have loved to do, but this would have required at least two if not three years.

6. *The two Mwera Clan Names*

I HAD departed from the ever present walls of the thick Makonde bush and felt as though I had left the ocean behind and gone ashore for a short while. The Reverend Father Alkuin had our lunch served in the dining hall for guests at the Bishop's headquarters in the Benedictine centre of Ndanda in the plains. I wanted to study the Mwera double clan system and we were engaged in making plans about my trip the following day to Mkowe when our table-boy, a Mu-Mwera himself, unexpectedly brought an Austrian national dish of dough dumplings, and I could not help showing my appreciation. Father Alkuin, coming as he did from the Bavarian side of the Alps, smiled understandingly. After sipping our black coffee, he took me to his room and showed me some of the many Kiswahili books which he is publishing and, to a large extent, writing himself.

"See. Here I say that not all the old customs at child-birth are bad. Some are good indeed and should be kept. They support the cleanliness and health of both mother and child. But others are bad if they are mixed up with irrational superstitions. For instance, to get relief a labouring woman is frequently pressed to give the names of men with whom she may have had extra-marital relations. If she does so, it is believed that guilt is transferred from the woman to her supposed lovers. Often a woman in despair during child-birth will name men as culprits, even if she never had anything to do with them. It is unbelievable what fear and ignorance can do !"

Father Alkuin has spent half a life-time in the area among two or three tribes of the Yao group. I knew how much I could learn from him and I was happy to hear that this moderate *via media* in handling African customs now gets encouragement from higher church authorities.

We were in the reception hall when the Bishop himself came. In his homely Swiss German language he spoke about the writings of one of his countrymen in the nineteenth century, Bachofen,

the classic author on mother-right. He wanted no doubt to know why I had specialized on matrilineal systems, and I did not hesitate to talk before those enlightened scholars about what I found particularly interesting in the matrilineal societies of South India, Assam and East Africa: the happier equilibrium between the sexes.

Perhaps I had, in my enthusiasm, gone a little too far. At once the Bishop pointed out typically patrilineal tribes like the rich Wa-Chagga around Kilimanjaro, the Wa-He-He of Iringa, and even the nearby Wa-Ngoni of Songea :

"Look—all the really active, expansive tribes are patrilineal—led by one strong chief; not by groups of Wa-Zee. Anyway, you will see matrilineals to-morrow. I have arranged for one of our fathers to drive you to our Mwera Mission at Mkowe. There you will find a congenial scholar who studied the Mwera customs and language for the last ten or twelve years. Ever since he came from St. Gotthard, in Switzerland."

We were driving from the open country covered with elephant grass, which was in places higher than the car, into a quite different landscape: forests of giant trees. Their large branches intertwined and built up shade domes under which long-tailed monkeys darted about like grey arrows with reddish, human faces. Sometimes they stopped and looked in wonderment at our puffing engine—or was it at the two Austrians inside?—for the young priest who drove happened to hail from my own country. He enjoyed talking in our local *patois* about his home in the Alps, his war experiences until he was taken prisoner at the siege of Stalingrad. As such he had spent several years on the Siberian farms and factories of the Reds and was now "unter die Schwarzen"—among the Blacks.

He liked his tasks and spoke about one of the main problems for the missions, the fight against plural marriage. He seemed fond of laughing in a good-natured way, and seemed to like his work.

After all, protestant missionaries had a harder stand, being obliged to prohibit both: more than one wife and also drink, whilst the third proselitizing group, the Muslims permitted four wives but no drink; at least no "factory-made stuff."

The main reason for plural marriage among Africans was, in

my young countryman's opinion, the superstitious taboo on sexual intercourse with a breast-feeding woman.

"They think the milk turns into poison then—and the baby dies. This is of course a *chenzi* superstition, but contains this much of truth that the starchy food which the mother gets does not give her enough proteins to build up a foetus and produce at the same time enough milk to feed the first baby. So it dies—of starvation. But they think of poison. That is why most wives ask their husband to take a co-wife who very often is a relative and serves the first wife until she herself gets pregnant. Then a third one comes in—if the husband is rich enough for a third bride-price!"

I wondered how church authorities were solving this knotty problem.

It seemed a real dilemma. The more so, perhaps, as unlike the Protestants no mention of birth control could be made here. Second wives, I suspected, continue to exist in fact, though not in name. They may be called servant girls and, I imagined, not exactly paraded if a visitor from the mission station, a priest or two nuns were calling.

Here my doubts become eloquent: does this not spread hypocrisy rather than piety?

But a realistic approach was no doubt necessary where a whole pattern of social structure was to be uprooted completely. The other day, it seemed, a case of real, almost, European jealousy had happened. Apparently one out of two women was saying that the other had no business to ask a frock from their common husband, because she, the real wife, married in the church, had only a *kaniki*—the kind of black raw cotton—and two *kangas*—those printed Japanese cotton shawls. Well! The other wanted a European tailored gown!

The wisdom of provoking jealousy, competition and enmity between women, where traditionally there had been a sense of goodwill and co-operation, seemed to me doubtful. The young Austrian *padre* made a quick thought-reading from my face, and was still eagerly talking when we arrived at a small wayside mission. He kept talking whilst eating a sumptuous *gabel-fruestueck* of Tyrolian brown bread, scrambled eggs, cheese, coffee and fruits—our second breakfast that day. The elderly lay brother

in charge of the mission school had come from a small village in Southern Germany where folkways are not very different from those in Austria and Switzerland. He nodded approvingly when my companion assured me that even a little bit of European morality spread among the "pagans" was better than nothing at all and that the great wisdom of compromise was to bring in the thin end of the wedge. The rest would follow automatically.

It was just then that I saw the first Mwera children. They were girls, passing by the window after their morning class in school, and greeted us with respectful, though somewhat curious, smiles. They seemed taller and stronger than their Makonde age-mates with more alert and more knowing eyes under comparatively longer bunches of woolly hair. Their black *kaniki* and coloured plastic beads looked just like those of the Makonde school girls with whom I automatically compared them. The Makonde children, boys and girls, often came to the entrance of my tent or of my mud-and-grass hut, excitedly waiting for the appearance of the little toy monkey which I made jump from my camp desk to the door frame and sometimes on a frizzy head with tight curls. When the yells and laughter grew too loud, a few sweets from the next Indian *dukawallah* restored contented satisfaction. The idea of such an approach to the Mwera children seemed out of place. They were somehow different from my gentle Makonde. I wanted to talk with the German brother about his school and I wondered why all over the world girls among warlike peoples, such as the Wa-Mwera, have something peculiarly independent about them. Was it the old practice of martial tribes to carry away the prettiest women after a victorious battle and to make them mothers of their own clans, as the Khasi of Assam did, that gave a particular mentality to their daughters? Or was it that the military tradition of their menfolk lent this special turn of mind to the young girls, as it may have been the case among mediaeval knightly Nayars in the old, pre-European Kerala?

"I think it is just this animistic matriarchy," answered my interlocutor in his dialect, so familiar to me, and elaborated on the comparative youth of Christian culture in this particular area.

"Don't forget that this school here is only a few years old. All the people around are still pretty *chenzi*. It is not like your Makonde who have had civilization brought to them by the missions, ever

since 1868. True, these were Protestants . . . but Europeans, is it not?" He chuckled and added that among the Mwera, it may take a little while till they learn what a proper family is, and that it is the father who has the pants on. So far the girls were still a bit *chenzi*—he added.

There was quite a difference between the attitude towards Africans and African values that struck me as *via media* at the episcopal level and that which reigned in the small bush schools where the contact of simple teachers, or managers, with the ordinary African boy or girl takes a concrete shape.

Soon we took leave and, on the last part of the way to Mkowe, we grew silent. The scenery changed completely once more. A large, newly built stone church with a grey iron roof of the shape of a Swiss mountain church, overlooked a hill at the beginning of richly forested valleys which seemed to lead towards a distant open piece of land, powerfully dominated by the triangular Ilulu Mountain. There were half a dozen Mwera homesteads, well kept square buildings between papaya and mango trees and with the usual paraphernalia of Europeanization in rural Africa—old petrol tins and corrugated iron roofs. A few young men in long pants and dark jackets greeted us loudly, whilst chickens ran away cackling.

The parsonage was spacious. After lunch my Austrian companion left for yet another mission house, entrusting me to my three new hosts: two exceedingly amiable priests, one Swiss, the other Mu-Makua, both eager to talk to a visitor from outside, and one somewhat taciturn Swiss lay brother who, if not very communicative, seemed however friendly disposed towards the mentality of African children.

"Poor kids," he commented when we sat down on the large verandah, in the evening, and listened to the school boys singing in Kiswahili:

"*Ni peleke kwa Mama*"—send me back to my mother.

And he added that to them the mother is the very essence of family and home. This good brother could talk in a broad Swiss-German dialect only, but my other host, the Swiss Reverend, answered my questions about the peculiarities of inheritance of

Mwera clan names in English so that his African colleague who did not know German, could take part in our conversation. The picture which they presented to me was fascinating for any anthropologist interested in matrilineal institutions generally, and clan succession systems in particular.

The main clan name among Wa-Mwera is called *chipinga* and is being inherited from the mother just in the same manner as among other matrilineal peoples. But every Mu-Mwera, man or woman, has in addition a secondary clan name, the *chilagwe*, which is being inherited from the father's side. The result of this combination is a kind of double, or hyphenated family name, such as we find in contemporary Western societies of America, England, Spain or Switzerland, but here in Africa the mother's, not the father's, family takes precedence.

During the middle of the last century, between 1850 and 1860 and before the Germans had made their first conquests in Tanganyika, Mwera migration took place from the Bangala River, about 70 miles west of Ndanda which we had left in the morning, and extended to the area where I was now. The Wa-Mwera had been hard pressed by their pursuers, the Ngoni raiders from the south, until they found refuge in the slopes of the Ilulu Hill, in front of us.

"Just over there" the African priest interrupted and pointed to the mighty, dark triangle.

The night had come and quietness spread. The boys clamoured no more for their mothers. There was no movement in the air, except drops of crystal-clear sounds which the frogs sent from their motionless trees in the virgin forest over the cool valley.

There they made a stand and for the first time, the Wa-Ngoni experienced a set-back. So the Ilulu Hill became sacred. The victorious Mwera people made the "lu-lu-lu" sound and since then prayers may be offered on this hill to the Great Creator Achipangania only. The word Achipangania, however, has nothing to do with the term *chipinga*, the matrilineal clan name, inherited from the mother. That term is derived from the root *ku-pinga* which, in Ki-Mwera, like in its Kiswahili form *ku-penda*, means to love, to like or to be attached. Thus the abstract noun *chipinga* indicates the unity of all those who love, or are attached to each other—the community of matrilineal family members.

I would have liked to hear more but it was late. When my hosts

had left me in the cool guest room of the parsonage, I opened the window and saw the Southern Cross slanting high over the forest, in the direction of the Makonde Plateau to which I was to return within a few days. I expected to see three elders the following morning and I wondered which kind of *Wa-Zee* I would be meeting.

Seated in the office room, the large marriage and birth registers of the parish on a table before us, we were trying to reconstruct a few family trees when the three *Wa-Zee* came to help. An old, bulky man had a dark yellow *kanzu*, the two others wore woollen overcoats and underneath at least two or three layers of white shirts, whilst the strong morning sun made me feel uneasy with the thin bush-shirt which I wore in consideration of my hosts' feelings on this point. Apart from the yellow *kanzu*, there was nothing that could have recalled Near East formality, as among the *Wa-Makonde*. These *Mwera* elders were representatives of a martial tribe, proud, careful to maintain their dignity, but with fewer opportunities to compare or measure one culture against the other. They had practically no Islamic contacts and also no experience of Protestant missions. There were certainly more "pagani", more followers of the traditional African religion, in those parts than on the Makonde Plateau where I had been able to meet only a few. I remembered my quiet visit to Mtiniko Maledya of the Muniachi Makonde clan, near Chiwonga. He was still a so-called pagan and had spoken to me about the yearly worship of God under the sacred tree, when after the harvest a few grains of each cereal used to be offered and when a sacred fire was produced by friction. Every household used to take embers from that fire to lighten a new flame at home.

Here the attitudes appeared different. The village elders seemed more orthodox Roman Catholic and less willing to talk about the old religion, but they were at the same time rather eager to stand on their dignity when we discussed all the many implications of their bilineal clan succession laws.

The *Wa-Makua*, a matrilineal tribe of the Yao group, have more in common with the *Wa-Makonde* of Newala than with the *Wa-Mwera* here in the Lindi District. Our young Makua priest had not, so far, realised what a unique system this *Mwera* double

naming really is in the Southern Province of Tanganyika, its nearest parallels being in Morogoro District and Rhodesia. Nor had his elderly Swiss colleague. The three Mwera *Wa-Zee*, the two priests and myself had a few hard nuts to crack co-operatively, before we began to understand this system. For instance, how did the two group names originally come into existence?

Going through several family genealogies in the course of a few days, I got a list of over 150 clan-names of both types: the matrilineal *chipinga* and the patrilineal *chilagwe*. The first names I came across were the following :

Matrilineal Chipinga

1. *Nguruwe*, pig (without a taboo attached).
3. *Nnimbo*, birds' glue.
6. *Nenbuka*, weakness.
7. *Chinguwile*, an object which hit, or hurt.
9. *Munkolo*, a female animal.
10. *Nchinga*, meaning unknown.
11. *Chitunguli*, meaning unknown.
12. *Nginjili*, an ever angry, or touchy, person.
13. *Ngombo*, a big banana.
14. *Kalembo*, a small cut.
15. *Mbinga*, name of a hill near the sacred Ilulu.

Patrilineal Chilagwe

2. *Nkumba*, a giving person (without a taboo).
3. is also used as *chilagwe* name.
4. *Mpache*, twin (*chilagwe* only).
5. *Maanje*, leaf-shelter for children.
6. also used as *chilagwe*.
8. *Maindi*, meaning unknown.
9. also used as *chilagwe*.
10. also used as *chilagwe*.
13. also used as *chilagwe*.
14. also used as *chilagwe*.
15. also used as *chilagwe*.

The discussion about each of these 150 clan-names led from one point to the other. For one thing, it did not seem clear on which principle, if any, a clan designation came to be used as a *chipinga* or as a *chilagwe* name, or as both. For another, the range of objects,

actions and meanings which served as clan-names is indeed wide. What could the association of a clan with the sacred hill, for instance, indicate? Obviously everyone was not only aware, but definitely proud of the historic victory over the dreaded Wa-Ngoni from the cold south. Yet, nobody could trace actual connections between the *Mbinga* clan and the Mbinga hill, near the sacred Ilulu Mountain. All Wa-Mwera were separated from the Wa-Ngoni by a deep rift, even as late as 1958 when I was among them. During one of my casual visits to the homesteads around Mkowe, a young man spoke to me about it when he said that the Wa-Ngoni still scoff at the Wa-Mwera for not paying bride-prices, whilst at the same time the Wa-Mwera think in turn that the Wa-Ngoni have only slaves and timid cattle for wives. Hearing this, I remembered the old Mu-Makonde who had, a few weeks before, told me of the fierce Wa-Mwera coming up to the Makonde Plateau in 1905 to spread the Maji Maji movement against the Germans.

With all the many differences of nations and traditions, a visible line runs still through the picture. The Swiss priest, no doubt, regretted that a German Bishop of his Benedictine order had been killed by the Wa-Mwera but he also seemed to appreciate these mountain people, his religious trustees, who had first successfully repelled the Wa-Ngoni from the south and then turned without wavering to the Wa-Dachi, the Germans from Dar-es-Salaam in the north. He added stubbornly:

"Well, well—we would have fought surely during the last world war—anyone who would have come to invade our Switzerland . . ."

The Wa-Mwera are no doubt remarkable in many respects. They are, however, most interesting to me because of their ingenious solution to the problem of incorporating in tradition the consciousness of both parental clan-names to their children.

After several days' work in collaboration with my benevolent Swiss, Makua, and Mwera assistants, I got a picture of the system which, in the last analysis, appeared to be the following: granting a theoretically assumed Mwera First Pair, we see a woman and a man each with two clan designations. One is the predominant *chipinga* and the other the subsidiary *chilagwe* name. All the children of the First Pair inherit their *chipinga* from their mother and their *chilagwe* from their father. The mother's *chipinga* thus

passes on through daughters to grandchildren whilst the *chipinga* of the First Pair father is not passed on at all. His *chilagwe* or subsidiary name, on the other hand, is inherited as such by *all* children and continues to be transmitted in the father's line to great-grandsons and further, but *not* to the daughters' children, because these latter will inherit their *chilagwe* from their fathers, not from their grandfathers, as illustrated below.

Mwera Genealogy

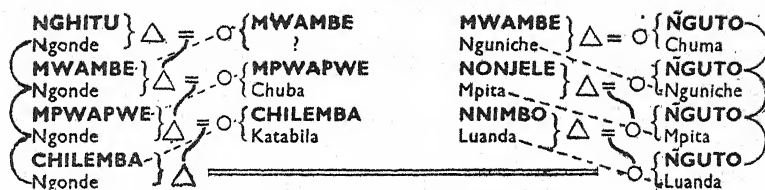


Fig 5, Table I

Husbands' paternal and wives' maternal ancestors are indicated by symbols and actual clan names filled in; the matrilineal *chipinga* on top and in capitals, the secondary patrilineal *chilagwa* below and in lower-case letters. These clan names convey translatable meanings, such as

<i>chilemba</i> , turban,	<i>luanda</i> = ?	<i>nghitu</i> , wilderness,
<i>chuba</i> , smoothening,	<i>mpita</i> , passer by	<i>ngonde</i> , war,
<i>chuma</i> , beads,	<i>mpwapwe</i> , quarrel,	<i>nguniche</i> , cover,
<i>katabila</i> , to hang,	<i>mwambe</i> , hill	<i>nguto</i> , tree,
		<i>nnimbo</i> , glue.

Unbroken matrilineal lines of female descent groups are emphasized by arches connecting their *chipinga* names on the right-hand margin of the table, unbroken patrilineal lines of male descent groups, likewise connecting *chilagwe* names, on the left-hand margin of the table.

(c.f. Lugure Genealogy Table II, on p. 101.)

Such an ingenious system of name inheritance set me wondering whether this traditional African succession pattern would not actually offer a solution to the knotty problem in contemporary Western society, where women are supposed to enjoy complete equality in all respects—economic, political and ideological—and yet have to give up their legal name identity at marriage and become known by their husband's name, even if he belongs to an altogether different country, religion or race.

I expressed my thoughts. A startled and somewhat disquieted expression of wonderment spread over the face of the young African

priest, whilst the creases around the eyes of our elder Swiss companion broadened into a mischievously humorous smile:

"Complete equality? Maybe that's so for the rest of the world,—but not for us in our *musterlande*. There is no franchise for women in Switzerland!" Cantonal, but *not federal* voting rights for women have lately been introduced in Geneva, apart from two other cantons: Vaud and Neuchatel.

I was happy to be back on the Makonde Plateau. The daily routine, the fetching of water from the kiosks, the closed-in wall of dense Makonde bush . . . all had taken on for me the feeling of a home in Africa though only a temporary one. But which home is not temporary in this world?

Early in the morning the hollow thud of pestles pounding the whitish cassava roots into a silvery flour from which I got my porridge made. The bath—two buckets of water, one hot, one cold, under the big, old tree—my green bathroom. It was less luxurious than the glazed tiles at Ndanda, but it was linked to the great garden around, with its thousands of birds singing and chirping against the rhythm of evenly crooning doves. I remembered Makarere and listened to it, as though it had a special message to give.

When the sun rose higher, a few men in their floating *kanzus*, or a couple of women and children in black, straight *kaniki* garbs would pass by on their way to the *shamba*, the fields. With bent hoes they would loosen the ground between the *mtama* stalks, or between the *mahindi*, Indian corn. They would pick a few *mchicha*, the leaves of the aromatic bush spinach, for the evening meal. But the tempo of life seemed to me slower than before my trip to the Wa-Mwera. Was it because of a difference in their way of life, or was it because we were in the last days of fasting before the new moon and the Id, the great yearly Ramadhan feast? In the evenings, I saw groups of relatives and friends gathering in front of their little square houses, waiting for the sun to set, when the daily fast might be broken. When the sun set, women brought and distributed food, as in India, but afterwards they joined their menfolk and ate along with them. Big enamel plates with colourful flower designs were the fashion.

I made new friends at Hokororo—a pocket of Wa-Makua

living on the plateau for two or three generations among their Makonde cousins. I told them about one of their tribal brothers who was an ordained Roman Catholic priest in Mkowe. They were proud and liked to hear about this, even though the Hokororo Wa-Makua are Muslims, but then—to Muslims the differences of creeds do not count so much, for:

“We have all come from God and to God we shall return.”

One day Musa, an elderly Mu-Makua, came to my tent and showed me some religious literature, a thin, cheaply printed pamphlet from Zanzibar. It was Kiswahili in Arabic script. For a moment I wondered whether it might have been Father Alkuin's under a pen-name but I soon discovered a genuine Arabic *mu'alim*. The problem which worried Musa was that of the Ahmadiyya Muslims from India. He had known many Indian Muslims before, mostly from Gujerat, but found that they used to keep to themselves almost as much as the *Wa-Zungu*, the Europeans, whilst the Ahmadis did not. They prayed and ate with African Muslims, but the *mu'alims*, the Qur'an teachers, said that Ahmadiyya concepts about prophethood were not correct and that in fact the Ahmadis were not real Muslims at all.

“Therefore,” Musa concluded, “I came to ask you about this, seeing that you share everything with us.”

I was happy to see his confidence and we concluded our talk, deciding that for Id prayers, I would come to the nearby mosque, a simple mud-and-wattle building, just of the kind, the Prophet himself had used thirteen hundred years ago.

These were my last days on the plateau. I pitched my tent at the very same place which I had visited on the eve of my arrival months before. This time I faced it more cleverly southeast, but it was hot in the afternoon all the same. The over-anxious villagers would not let me sleep outside, because of the leopard and the pride of lions in the neighbourhood.

“They will not attack a person who is awake. But sleep outside? No, even a hyena may nibble at you.”

So I lay inside obediently but sometimes awake in my tent, until the cool night air filtered through the slit of the inner canvas which I secretly kept open. Then I reviewed the many scattered facts which

I had collected, and tried to fit them together as into a mosaic. Seemingly disconnected details, yet parts of a bigger whole. These matrilineal peasants have had to fight many years, though they have not liked it. Very different, indeed, from the Wa-Ngoni, fierce and very distinctly patriarchal warriors, and even more so from the terrible Wa-Zimba who came three hundred years ago, burning, killing everything before them. The more peaceful and gentle disposition of the Wa-Makonde, here, is no doubt in keeping with their matrilineal social structure, basing tribal government on plural authority, rather than on a monolithic concentration of power in one person. The groups are held together by affection not by competition. Each family constitutes a small democratic republic, with mother, father, but also mother's brother, as its main figures and is further linked to a wide group of other family republics by each man's characteristic double function, as father in one family and simultaneously as mother's brother in one or more other families through his sisters. The resultant ideal of cooperative affection, rather than competitive pride, is a consciously formulated concept, not a mere chance product of the social structure:

"Never try to outdo your neighbours by ostentation, even if you can afford it!"

It is thus no mere chance that makes each of these grass-roofed mud houses look like the other—and all so peaceful.

All homesteads derive their hearth fires from the thanks-giving flame which is once a year lit under the sacred tree—or was so before this "paganism" was rooted out and most ritual, in the initiation rites, was replaced by scholarship competitions. Every element of our civilization seems to contradict the mainsprings of these ideas: affection and co-operation, and to replace them by strife.

But do we ourselves not also aim at a democratic equilibrium? Do we not say that our own civilization is based on "Love thy neighbour as thyself?" If so, then why this intolerance? Why must we say that the Christian family is based on the father only and has no place for the mother or maternal uncle? To the average mission teacher, or even Government administrator, a mother's brother is a queer person from whom to ask a child's school fee. So the father is made to pay, with an appeal to his instinct of pos-

sessiveness over "his own" children and another to his "progressiveness", which is understood to be incompatible with the old order and with a "primitive regard" for emotional ties between mothers and children.

But in actual fact it is untrue to say that progress in technology is necessarily incompatible with a tradition of affection-tied decentralisation. It is untrue that "progress", much less Christianity demands a ban on emotional values. It is not progress itself, but our concept of progress, that is so intransigent. Why must the young husband be encouraged to take away the wife from her ancestral home and make her a stranger in his own? Is it because of "progress", or because we ourselves do, or did so? Now, she becomes a stranger in the husband's family for whom a bride-price must be paid, even among these matrilineal peoples where a token gift of some ornaments used to be quite enough. In spite of highbrow anthropological theory about anti-divorce insurance, the introduction of substantial marriage payments is, among matrilineal peoples, the mechanism by which a wife is turned into a paid servant, if not a slave, to those who gave the cattle, or cash, for her.

Why must we people sow the seeds of such unrest? Sow the wind when we are sure to reap the whirlwind?

During the hours of waiting for the cool night air to penetrate my secret slit in the tent, I again felt sometimes as though on a sea voyage. There were no harsh noises around, no radios, or even hooting motor cars. Sometimes, a rustling of dry leaves. Sometimes distant thunder like the heaving swell of the sea.

Sometimes, it was as though the sand beneath would have been dreaming and would have drawn me into the circle of its dream. Not far away, to the east, lies the Arabian Sea, voyages over whose waters in other days came back to me at that time in the memory of a full moon night off the Hadramaut coast. Calm shone the sea, like a giant lake between three ancient lands. Gold lay over its water and the cliffs of Southern Arabia seemed silver.

"This way," the people of East Africa say, "the Queen of Sheba travelled to Ethiopia." From there, perhaps, has come down to them the tradition which traces descent through the mother even today. And that was three or four thousand years ago. How short our lives are! Must we ourselves destroy what little there is of

beauty and happiness in this brief span between cradle and grave?

Must we?

Still, there is so much beauty left. Has this too, to be destroyed? I can understand the naive optimism of the Victorian Age which counted the rising balances of industrialization and thought that was all there was to worry about. What, however, I fail to understand is this optimism, among people who are highly sensitive to traditional beauty everywhere else. I met a young Englishman of the best kind among the present administrators: university-educated, with a keen aesthetic sense. He had earlier made a notable contribution to our understanding of medieval art in Europe. An utterly lovable person, full of good-will and even affection for the Africans, which are obvious to anybody who knows him. Yet, when we once chatted about the flies, the heat, the inconsistencies, the transfers connected with service in Africa, he soon struck another more optimistic note:

"Ah, yes—that is all there, no doubt, but once you pass a station which you knew as a miserable little village of two or three thatched huts, where now there is a reinforced concrete corporate market, a line of newly built *dukas*, a smart mission carpentry school and a high Corporation water tank, looking almost like an atomic power-plant . . . Well, you know, you did help to bring about all this—in spite of everything, the flies, the heat, and what not. Oh, no! I still maintain, service in Africa is worth all this and a good deal more, for it is a beautiful and a good thing!"

What are we to answer to this? Was he not kind and did he not believe in his mission? And was it not the same with most missionaries? Even when they told the young men that their ancestors' belief in God was no religion at all, was *chenzi*, thereby making some of them disbelieve in *any* concept of God?

On the last afternoon a festive atmosphere permeated the markedly cooler evening air. The approach of the cold season could be felt. The rhythm from many pestles resounded in wooden mortars all around. The new moon was expected to be seen that night and the following day was to bring the great feast of Ramadan to celebrate the end of a long month of fasting, of darkness, and to welcome a new beginning of life and of light.

I closed my books and notes. A new chapter of my own life

was to end soon. I decided to see once more the old sacred tree, the lonely homestead where I had received my first lesson in cassava pounding. I had been told that a Makonde Water Corporation kiosk had been opened there. I wanted to take a last walk along the winding path through the thick bush.

Suddenly a cry burst in the silent air. A cry, as I had not heard since long. It did not sound like that of a grown-up man, nor of a child either. It was followed by another and still another . . .

"The moon—The moon."

In the flickering of a second, memories of the past can sometimes pass through an unexpectedly opened window of consciousness. On Easter day, the Greek cry rises over the lonely hills, the olive and cypress trees : "Christ has risen—Christ has risen !"

How silently floats the new moon in the cool evening air! Such purity of white radiation in a golden frame of light as in the thin crescent blade . . . How can this thing of unreality come to shine in this world? This, our passing, dark world?

The cries of deep human joy and wondering thanks spread out through the silent Makonde bush. I would not move, for my whole vision was filled with the gently curved spark of light. I noticed that here, in the southern hemisphere, the crescent moon is tilted just the other way round, as it is "at home". But whilst I noted it, something within wanted to cry out like all these brothers and sisters around:

"There is no home in this world—but this. This Light."

The big tree had not yet been cut down. It was there and there was also the small yard, the two houses and the cashew-nut tree. But behind it all sprang up the strong structure of black iron bars, holding the glittering cubical water-tank high above the two houses. Like every other, it had six square faces, each with a huge X pressed into them, probably to prevent the bulging of the tank under the pressure of so much water. It looked impressive, if somewhat fearful and stiff.

After a while the peasant woman came out and her little daughter gave me a shy smile of recognition. Did I still know how to pound cassava roots with the pestle? I showed her that I did.

The mother smiled again and I ventured the question whether

life had become much easier, now that the water tower was so near? Whilst I asked the question thoughtlessly, remembrance of the Makonde ancestral legend came back to my mind.

As she began to pound new roots, the woman nodded. Then she said: "Yes, there it is. So much water at our place . . . See there!"

But it sounded as though some fear was mixed with her pride: Can too much of a good thing be good—even at one's own place? Or was there still a lingering remembrance of the Makonde ancestor's warning, never to live near water?

I had no answer to offer, so I said: "*Kwa heri Mama!*" (Good-bye, mother!) And I heard her polite reply:

"*Asante Bwana; asante sane!*" (Thanks, master; thanks very much!)

Then I went once more down the curving path towards my tent. Before the bend, in front of the ancient tree, I turned back for a last look. There the two were, still pounding together. They seemed distant and small under the overshadowing tank above. For a beat or two, the mother stopped and wiped a drop of sweat from her temples. And once more it looked like a tear.

Then I marched on, over the straight part of the footpath, and the distant rhythm of the pestles became lost in the dreamy crooning of a late turtle dove: "Why . . . why . . . why?"

7. *Uluguru Mountains*

PATRICK Kunambi smiled easily when he sat down to dinner in my hotel at Morogoro:

"The D.O. phoned that you had come to study our Uluguru social system. I shall be glad to help you."

"This is good news. The D.O. has told me about you and I know that you are the Deputy Sultan and moreover interested in history as a pedagogue."

I replied in genuine response to the breadth of personality which found expression in the young face in front of me. At once I started describing to Kunambi the nature of my Makonde and Mwera work, wondering at the same time whether a Roman Catholic Deputy Sultan was more of a traditional chieftain or a Western administrator. I was new in the Morogoro District of Eastern Tanganyika.

He listened to me with the familiar eagerness to learn and see the other fellow's point of view, which I had come to take as typical of young African intellectuals. However, on the Makonde plateau and among the Wa-Mwera my intellectual acquaintances happened to be outsiders, from the tribal angle: a Makua priest, a half-Yao officer in the Community Development and her brother-in-law who helped me as interpreter-guide after his return from studies in England. On the other hand, Justinus Mponda, the Makonde, M.L.C., to whom I am indebted for so much guidance in the initial stages of my work on the plateau, is an older and too strongly pronounced personality to have suggested the comparison with "typical African youth" of the day. Now I was in a new situation, speaking for the first time to a young intellectual who happened to be also a member of the tribe under study.

Informally the proprietor of the hotel, a Polish refugee, came and interrupted us:

"Why did not Mrs. Kunambi come along?"

Her husband explained that she had to leave for Dar-es-Salaam the same afternoon. Later on, during my stay in the rugged, cool,

Uluguru Mountains, Patrick Kunambi was to take me once to his constituency among the Wa-Kwere on the Bagamoyo side and he told me of her social work. Ever since they had been colleagues as school teachers, the couple had pursued a wide range of educational and economic activities, as organisers of home industries—blending contradictory trends which stem from different sets of traditions: chieftainship, studentship, tribal cohesion, parliamentary democracy. All this seemed to have been fused into one organized and graceful personality pattern, typical for Tanganyika. I searched in vain for a parallel among either my past Indian or my still earlier European experiences in life.

On that first evening with Patrick Kunambi, he confirmed what I had already gathered about Luguru history from a perusal of entries into the District Book of Morogoro by British officers and Dutch missionaries.

Not long before the Germans' arrival in 1884, the Uluguru Mountains had been densely forested right to their tops, which shoot up eight or nine thousand feet above sea level. At that time, Uluguru was an almost uninhabited mountain island between the agricultural plains around Bagamoyo, the old Arab port and capital in the north-east, the Wa-Saramo around Dar-es-Salaam, a little further south on the east coast and the cattle-herding Masai, the Wa-Gogo and other picturesque tribes in the north and northwest. There was to the south of the present Morogoro District, and still is, a thinly populated expanse of low lands, filled with the unhealthy swamps of the Rufiji and its contributory, the Ruha River.

Years ago, the first Kingolo, ancestor of the present chief of the southern Uluguru Mountains, had come from Ubena, where he had gathered followers from other tribes. Among these were the Wa-Hehe, powerful warriors whose dynasty and independence was later crushed by the Germans, and other groups of immigrants from the present Handeni, Bagamoyo and Kisarawe Districts in the north-east.

The Wa-Luguru grew as a new tribe out of this heterogenous *mixtum compositum*—a rather extraordinary origin for an East African tribe. But the similarities of this new tribe to the neighbouring Wa-Zigua, to the Wa-Saramo, the Wa-Nguru, the Wa-Kami, the Wa-Kwere and even to their traditional enemies, the Wa-Kutu, below the Luguru centre of Bwakira Juu and around Matombo,

makes this composite tribe appear less unnatural (Map II, p. 49). How has this tribe come to exist? What were the forces that led to this unusual tribal history—unusual in East Africa generally but even more so among the few matrilineal tribes.

For one thing, there is every reason to connect the northward migration of the clans with the great Ngoni invasion further south during the last century. The further advance of the Wa-Ngoni to the southeastern edge of Lake Victoria by-passed Uluguru. The Morogoro District itself, untouched by this historic invasion, was traversed only by Arabs and other slavers, south of the Uluguru Mountains in Ukutu (Gower, 1958 : 212), and later by Germans on the main route between Dar-es-Salaam and Mwanza.

When the Wa-Luguru began in the nineties of the last century to climb higher and higher on the steep slopes in search of richer soil and empty lands, the Germans were already worried about the rapid deforestation of the Uluguru Mountains. But population increase and soil erosion continued. In 1930, the British District Authorities estimated the Luguru total population at ninety-one thousand (Hutchinson, 1930: 16), and in 1958 at a hundred and sixty thousand (Moore, 1958).

Patrick Kunambi nodded at my proudly exhibited, though quite newly acquired, wisdom and said that he could add an original contribution of his own to Uluguru history :

“My maternal uncle Nghasegwa XI was the 15th Kibwe of our matriclan, the Mwenda. He was older than my father who was himself in Zanzibar even before the coming of Livingstone there in 1866. My uncle was 110 or 120 when he died in 1956. He remembered old tales and often said that our clan had come not from the south, as most others, but from a mountainous land, far far away in the north. At one time, our ancestors left that land and started traveling first through a country which was almost like a desert. Then they crossed two rivers and reached a mountain with a white top. They kept moving on through another expanse of plains, passed over another group of mountains, until they stopped for a while at a place which they called “Pongwe”. From this first Pongwe they went further south to a new Pongwe near the Mukeza Mountains, then moved south-east, halting on their way at altogether three places, again traditionally called Pongwe of which the last one was in the plains below Korogwe, in the present Pangani and Handeni

Districts. Continuing their way, they moved into the Zigua country of the present Bagamoyo District, a matrilineal area of Tanganyika, where their halting place was for the last time named Pongwe—probably the present village of that name in Central Bagamoyo.”

Patrick Kunambi explained a phonetic difference: of all the Pongwes, the first vowel of the last Pongwe gets a lesser accent.

Passing through the country of the Wa-Kwere, the Mwenda clan had two other halting places which they did not, however, call Pongwe, any more but Mbigila and Pugu respectively. From there they entered the Uluguru Mountains, near Matombo. At last the Mwende clan went up the eastern slopes of the Uluguru Hills and spread out over them.

One day, the first Kibwe, as Patrick Kunambi told me, went hunting into the high-lying hills where a man called Magoma lived. Magoma tasted the beer which Kibwe's niece had brewed and he liked it so much that he asked her to prepare some for him, which she agreed to do. However, when she bowed over the brew to stir it, the baby which she carried on her back, fell into it and died. As a compensation for this loss, Magoma gave two slaves and a piece of land to Kibwe who settled down there and started a new matrilineage in those parts of the Uluguru Mountains.

This legendary history certainly adds to the picture of the composite Luguru tribe of which most other clans are reported to have come from the south. But it has also other implications. The tribal legend of the Mwenda tells us of their far distant and mountainous home, beyond a desert—suggestive of perhaps Mount Kenya, if not Ethiopia. It speaks of a second white-capped peak—perhaps the Kilimanjaro. No doubt, the mention of Mount Kenya brought back to my mind the Kikuyu legend of Moombi, the matriarch, and her daughters. Besides this, there was certainly the web of old traditions, connecting Ethiopia with Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba, Southern Arabia and perhaps the ancient civilization of the Indus Valley. Dreams spun around mythologies of a far distant past? Too far away to be included in my present limited and very localised interests.

My friend had mentioned the basically monotheistic nature of “pagan” Luguru religion but I also learned later that the *Chamungu*, the little sacrificial huts, were occasionally soaked with petrol and burnt down by over-anxious proselytisers. It was said

that *guru*, or *kuru*, meant high, above, up, in various northern Bantu languages, such as Ki-Sukuma, Ki-Nyamwezi in Tanganyika, and also in languages of Uganda and northern Kenya.

"Do you know that we speak in our Ki-Luguru language of a teacher always as a *sekulu*, never addressing him by his personal name? For respect, of course. *Kulu* and the Sanskrit root of *Guru*, are they not perhaps related?"

Climbing up the winding hair-pin bends of the road from Mgeta to Chensema, I get a sense of the romance which the early migrations must have imparted to the first immigrants. Surely these slopes must have looked very different when they were still covered with dark green shade trees similar to those which can still be seen in the bit of reserve forest around the highest peak of 9,000 feet. The road passes through imperfectly terraced fields of millet and maize, showing big scars where the rains sweep down the denuded ground, tearing torrents of valuable top soil along into the deeply cut valley. There are many farm houses, dotted all over the slopes, and swarms of school-going children. The first thing that impresses me about them are the huge tin crosses and St. Mary medals which girls, boys and even grown-up men, wear. The metal plates show like mysterious charms beneath the half-open collars of the boys' blue striped, sweat-soaked shirts. The children play on their long daily morning way to school and shout to me in wonderment, seeing that I am going on foot instead of riding in a motor car like the other *Wa-Zungu*, they have so far seen: most mission fathers of the Holy Ghost order and the agricultural officers, Community Development personnel and other administrators. Or is it that they marvel because I do not wear a shirt? I take advantage of the cool air, whilst I am climbing from about four to six thousand feet. It is June—winter in the southern hemisphere but still hot!

A school boy with the round, soft features of the southern Bantus wants to know from my porter where I go and from where I come. A tall, lean girl of about seven years takes in the unusual shape of my leather bag with wondering eyes. She turns her long head and I see a straight, Hamitic profile. I pass my fingers over the almost reddish and yet frizzy curls and they feel nearly as smooth as those of a European child.

The difference of physical types among the Wa-Luguru tallies well with their history of migrations from different countries. Weeks later, when settling down in the rest-house in Bwakira Juu, I was to be again struck by this difference of racial features. Two women, neighbours and close friends as I had at first guessed, seemed to me typical of the meeting of the two different African racial types there: the Nilo-Hamite, slender, gracile strain from the north and the Bantu, roundish, and heavier from the south. Soon afterwards, however, I was to discover that my two "inter-racial" friends and neighbours were in fact full sisters: "*Mama moja—Dada moja*" from one mother and one father—a living example of Mendelian genetics. (Pl. X).

Bwakira Juu is the Luguru stronghold opposite and above Matombo, the old advance base of the Wa-Kutu—the traditional rivals of the Wa-Luguru. I had been encouraged to visit the place by a number of friends and especially by Mr. Dunston Omari, a former D.O. of Newala. From him, I had learned that Bwakira Juu is an almost completely Muslim island in the otherwise Catholic converted hills. Traditional culture and matrilineal institutions, he thought, would still survive there and could well be studied. He had also been the first person to tell me about the Hega of Bwakira Juu, the descendant in the matrilineal line of one among the three great rain-makers in the past. These rain-makers seem to have dominated Uluguru at one time and their power appears to have been rooted in "charismatic leadership" or the command of "occult forces"—by whichever of those terms we may try to name the enigma of personality. Their descendants were not formal chiefs in the sense in which chieftainship is legally rooted in many other political systems of Africa. However, their position came to be recognized by foreign Governments. The present owner of the title Hega is thus a sub-chief with duties to, and recognition by, the British Government in the United Nations Trust Territory of Tanganyika.

The organization of my approach to Bwakira Juu came from Anthony Moore, the D.O. at Morogoro. He arranged practically everything for me from the cook, young Rashidi, to the actual transport in his Land-Rover up to the foot of the Bwakira massif where he left me in a travellers bungalow with an encouraging smile on his firmly set, aggressive looking lips which had spoken few, but most helpful, words, to pave my way further up. Rashidi turned

out to be a true wonder of a cook. Instead of telling the usual tales about the dangers of the wild hills with their malaria and *chenzi* people, he said with a shy smile that if we did not tarry too much on the way, he could see his fiancée, the daughter of the Mtawala, the Sub-Chief Hega himself. Thoughtfully Rashidi also suggested from which Indian *duka* in the plains, I should secure the second hurricane lamp and a few colourful enamel plates which we still needed.

The *dukawallah* was a tall and voluminous gentleman with two or three relatives in tight European silk frocks, helping in the shop under the supervision of his wife. The old lady also wore European, though considerably bulkier, garments. All spoke highly of Mtawala Hega and, praised the Mtawala's loyalty to Government. He would also help me, they thought.

The *dukawallah* exhibited a marked tendency to expansiveness and volubly gave me his point of view about the near-rebellion which had followed the attempts of the Agricultural Department to introduce in the area terraced ridge-cultivation, so as to prevent soil erosion—the great problems of all, but especially these hills in Africa.

There have been initial difficulties in carrying out the hard work of terracing for no immediate gain. Perhaps these difficulties could have been overcome, if the plan had from the start been introduced by the Community Development Officer, who had now come to the area.

“A very good man. A highly educated administrator. You should see him !”

I had often heard of the failure in the agricultural scheme without knowing the reasons. I tried to learn more about the whole scheme on this occasion and elsewhere so that many remarks passed by different people formed into a more general impression. Such a scheme needed ideological support. If the missions did not give it, difficulties were hard to overcome. The best of intentions, even on the part of African leaders, would not be sufficient. Nobody wanted, or dared to criticise the missions. They owned much of the lands, the productive undertakings and most of the schools in the district. They formed public opinion. With my first interlocutor in the bazaar they were particularly popular, being his best customers in the entire area.

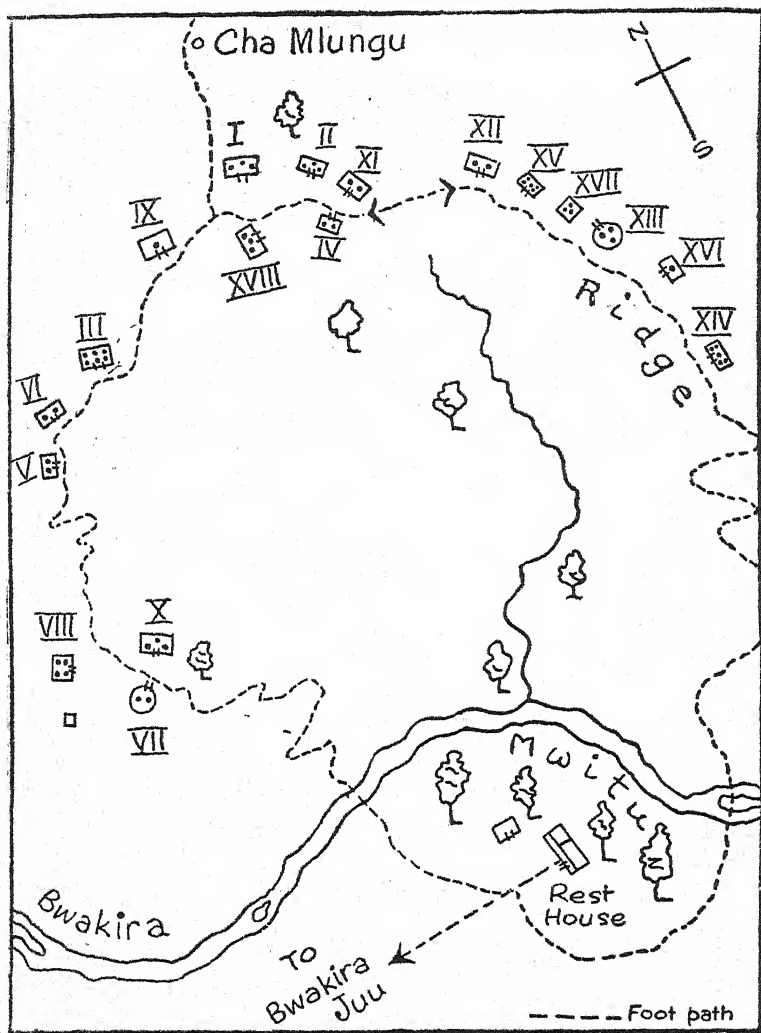


Fig. 6, Map III

KIPEREBETU : SITUATION OF HOUSES

(Dots indicate numbers of inmates during the author's stay)

Among persons referred to in the text are: *Habiba* in House No. II, *Hussaini* and *Mwatatu* with their respective mothers in V and VI, *Msumi Mwenye Mwua* with his wife in VII, *Umari* and *Hereni* with two children in VIII, *Mulugaluga* and *Mutsila Koga* in XII, *Alfani* and *Sitamani* with their son in XIII and *Ramadhani* in XVI.

(The distance between the houses XI and XII is considerably shortened on this sketch map)

"By far my best ! One Dutchman, you see, drinks and smokes more than a Britisher with family, children and servants all told. And more than a whole church congregation of African converts—even if they are as peculiar as our Wa-Luguru up here."

He called for the beer bill. "Look ! This is only one month's account. Oh yes ! The Dutch fathers are my best customers. Most of them purchase their cigars locally, their petrol and even their photographic material. I have not gone into that business yet. Perishable stuff. But the Dutch fathers—jolly good. Strong young men!"

Outside the bazaar the Uluguru slopes mounted up to distant, dark blue peaks, etching their crystalline lines into the purity of the late evening sky. Two shades of ethereal blue lined out one against the other until the setting sun mixed warm, golden tints into the picture. I suddenly thought of the Mwenda clan people, climbing for the first time somewhere here into the Uluguru Mountains, at the end of a long journey. For me it was a beginning.

Every time field experience opens up for the anthropologist is a bit of a new world into which he hopes to enter, a world with a promise of man's hopes and the threat of man's fears.

Kiperebetu was the village of my choice. It was only two furlongs from the rest house in Bwakira Juu. The rest-house was a small barrack, white-washed and with a cement concrete base, unencumbered by those steel-framed glass panes which had met my thorough disapproval at Budaka in Uganda, more than half a year before. The simple wooden shutters of my sleeping room were kept open practically the whole time. Only during the afternoons when the sun was too hot, had they to be shut, but then I was out on field-work. Prosaic as this resthouse was, it stood under the splendid giant trees of the *mwitu*—the sacred grove. When Rashidi had told me that, because of leopards, he wanted his future brother-in-law to sleep with him in the isolated kitchen house, I suspected that it was actually because the powerful rain-makers had perhaps been buried there at one time.

In Kiperebetu there were eighteen houses, two of them being round traditional buildings [VII and XIII, on Map III, & Plate

IX(a)] the others, square, acculturated. As on the Makonde plateau there was here also a leading man, a *Mzee*, or village elder, though in no way a chief, sub-chief or headman in the formal sense. His name was Msumi Mwenye Mwua. [Plate VIII(a)] Whilst *Msumi* is a personal name, *mwenye* means "owner", in the sense of the Hindusthani *wallah*, and *mwua* "rain". This splendid combination was to me suggestive of the old rain-maker tradition which again was associated with the Hegas and two other old Luguru leaders. Msumi, commenting upon his two second names, said they commemorated only the fact that there had been heavy rains during his initiation, in his youth. In spite of this factual and prosaic explanation, Msumi, with his kindly, weighing, sometimes a little worried-looking, intense eyes, did look to me like a rain-maker, and I am still not fully convinced that the explanation I was given was the only and exclusively valid one. Msumi remembered many things that were beyond the horizon of an average Mu-Luguru. When the Germans left the Eastern Province in 1916, he was a young man and he recalled the arrival of the pursuing British and Indian troops. He told me that a famine had followed the war and that many people had died. He remembered also his maternal grand-mother Monica, though he himself and his mother Kimelu were Muslims. In consultation with his nephews and neighbours around, he explained to me who his ancestors were and how the clan-names are inherited. This inheritance system turned out to be an involved one, with some similarities to the unilineal Makonde clan pattern, but with even more affinity to the bilineal system of the Wa-Mwera (cf. Table I on p. 83) in Lindi District. I have always been eager to understand the details of the explanations given by people about their own names because names for them are not parts of an abstract theory, a set of institutions, but daily life. They are not a schematic formula, but reference to concrete relatives, living and dead.

Lukolo, the first term which I grasped, was the very same word which the Wa-Makonde use for a matrilineage, like that started by Bi Mkubwa Chitolo, or perhaps her son, Nahaule, and his daughters, the five Binti Nahaule, in Mkonjowano. But the significance of the word *lukolo* appeared to be here much wider than I had found it to be there. In Uluguru it is the entire line of principal and matrilineal clan-names which is termed as a person's *lukolo*.

In Makonde, on the contrary, the word *lukolo* refers only to a limited group of generations, a "lineage". On the other hand, however, the matrilineal clan as such is there known as *litawa* (*ukoo* in Kiswahili). The word *lukolo* in Uluguru has therefore the same wide meaning as the Makonde word *litawa* and the Mwera word *chipinga*.

Luguru Genealogy

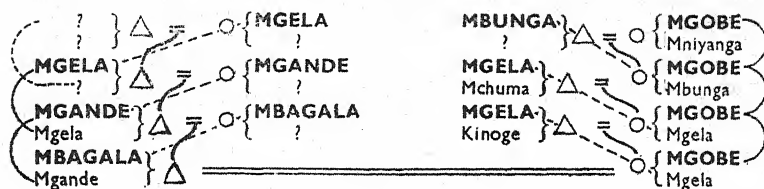


Fig. 7, TABLE II

Arrangements as on Table I: male and female descent groups indicated by symbols, actual clan names filled in against each symbol, main clan on top in capitals (*lukolo*) and below, secondary (*mtala*) in lower-case letters.

Few Luguru clan names carry translatable meanings, such as (*m*)*gobe*, a hole for storing grain, or (*m*)*gande*, a kind of porridge.

As in Table I, the succession in clan designation is again emphasized by outer arching lines, here indicating the unbroken continuity of the matriline in *lukolo* on the right-hand margin and the intermittent overlapping of the patrilineal *mtala* on the left-hand margin. *Mtala* names are often no longer remembered for grandparents, in one case not even for the respondent's own (deceased) mother, which is indicated by question marks.

(cf. Mwera Genealogy Table I, on page 83)

Like among the Wa-Mwera, there is among the Wa-Luguru yet a second clan-name, inherited from the father's side, the *mtala* as I found out. I was naturally most curious to determine whether this *mtala* paralleled the Mwera paternal clan-name, the *chilagwe*, which forms complete patrilineal lines there. But all the time I was tracing this pattern of abstractions in the attempt to grasp rules, methods and institutions, there was in me sub-consciously the sense of getting something which, though actual and real, was yet in a way beside the point.

Old Msumi was quite interested to see me honestly struggling in the attempt to clarify *lukolo* and *mtala* relationships. A slightly amused, if not incredulous, smile vascillated through the wrinkles

around his kind old eyes and even the folds around his mouth, some of which harboured tiny white beard-spirals. My Owner-of-Rain seemed to have in mind something different from what I was enquiring about: family trees, clan names, migrations. But what was it? . . . I mentioned Patrick Kunambi's clan, the Mwenda, as having come from a far distant country in the north. Here, however, all clan migration legends pointed to the cold south, to Iringa, for instance, in the Southern Highlands, and also to connections with the Wa-Hehe.

Msumi had a niece, Helen (pronounced Hereni), who lived with her husband Umar (pronounced Omali) in a near-by house. (VIII on Map. III). Both of them were sturdy cultivators, much shorter than Helen's maternal uncle. It did not surprise me to hear from them that they thought agriculture to be the best thing in life. But when it came to describing which things one *likes* best, I anticipated that they would mention for example the green plastic beads which the young woman wore as the only ornamental addition to her black *kaniki* cloth. However, she seemed to agree with her husband that what she liked best was Mlungu, God. Umar added that we humans only remember eating, sleeping and—death: "But God . . . that is different. After death, we may go to Him."

I was struck by the concepts and ideas of that couple, as much as by the conjunction of their names, the Arabic Umar and the European Helen. How did Helen, born in 1936 in a completely Muslim surrounding, get baptised? The explanation was that a few weeks after her birth she had been taken ill to the nearest mission station and the Dutch fathers there said that they had a very good medicine, a sacred water to be applied on the head. So she was baptised, recovered but never returned to the mission station or school. Umar, on his side, had never learned from a *mu'alim*, a Qur'an teacher. However, they both lived all their lives as Muslim peasants, in other words as African cultivators, following for all practical purposes the old African way of worship. There is one great God—Mlungu. The Arabs say: Allah.

During May, June and July, the south equatorial winter nights are cold in the hills and during late afternoons, little fires flare up at the entrance of every house. One day, on my way back from the

village, over the ridge, I stopped at House XII (Map. III), to the left, and squatted down at the open fire of dried *mtama* stalks. I was happy to warm my fingers, stiff from scribbling notes into my books, whilst crouching on a low wood-carved stool. Old Mulugaluga sat on a *charpai* by my side and laughed understandingly when he saw me rubbing my numb fingers. Would I not like to take a little snuff? He had some in a small glass tube and called his wife, Mutsila Koga, even before I could say that I did not take snuff. Soon we were chatting about other things.

During the Maji Maji Rebellion of 1905, houses were burnt in his native country, the present Kilosa District. His parents were killed and he somehow found his way to Uluguru. He too remembered 1916 and the defeat of the Germans. But he did not remember his *mtala*, the second clan name derived from the father. This seemed to me significant, as I never came across anyone who would not know his *lukolo*, the first clan-name, derived from the mother. Mulugaluga, though he came from a different district, considered himself as a Mu-Luguru, and seemed to be fully accepted as such by other members of the community.

It was quite dark when I reached home. At long last I had a clear picture: the *mtala* name is the second clan name, derived from the father, just like the *chilagwe* in Mwera society. However, unlike the *chilagwe*, it is not the father's secondary clan designation, but his first matrilineal *lukolo* name. Whilst in the ideal Mwera First Pair, both father and mother had each two clan names, one matrilineally, the other patrilineally transmitted, this is not so in the Luguru system. Here both parents had originally each *one* main name only which is matrilineally transmitted: the *lukolo*, but the father's *lukolo*, when transmitted to his children, turns into their second clan name, the *mtala*.

The similarity of this arrangement with western double names is here still greater than among the Wa-Mwera in Lindi District. But in western society it is the father's group designation (family- or clan-name) which plays the dominant role, whilst here it is the mother's.

Could this sociative abstraction as an achievement of the African genius in search for an equilibrium between the sexes not have been adopted to problems in the West? Just a little bit more open-mindedness and a wee bit less of racial pride, or cultural prejudice,

would have opened up so many fields to the exchange of values between two meeting civilizations and to a give-and-take attitude that might have worked for the advantage of both. It was late that night when I blew out the smoking hurricane lamp and realized that all the time life had been around me. Quiet nocturnal life of moths and bats and night birds. It spun its ways between the branches and the yellowish shining stems of the sacred trees. There were small, grunting sounds too. What were they adding to the long, unwritten story of life?

One by one I came to know those who played a somewhat marked role in the society of Kiperebetu. Hussaini (House V) had earned cash in the plains, down at Morogoro, and had been able to pay twenty shillings advance to the bride-price of a hundred shillings for Mwataatu. She was young, complacent and had her hair arranged in parallel lines. Hussaini thought that she was not a real Muslim, but a pagani, because she had never undergone the water ritual, but in this he seems to have unduly mixed Christianity and Islam. So long as he had considered me to be part of the modern world from down in the plains and a potential ally in his dreamed modernization of Kiperebetu, he was friendly and in many ways helpful. However when he saw my interest in traditional values, he lost his interest in me. Then there was Ramadhani, a leper since the last twelve years, who was treated at the near dispensary of Bwakira Juu. It could be hoped that the progress of the disease had been arrested. Still, with his reduced stumps, instead of fingers, he could do little work and depended on his mother's sister's daughter, Sitamini, and her husband, Alfani, who lived in the neighbouring house. He told me that what they gave him to eat was enough, even though he could not dig or sow on the *shambas*. He was only able to do a little harvesting. His hut consisted of the mere wooden skeleton without the usual mud filling between the posts for he could not manage to do it with his mutilated hands. Nobody thought of helping him. The hut stood over the ridge where an icy wind blew at night and fire could not last long under such a poor, open shelter. At that time I used in my well-built rest-house two woollen blankets, even though only one window was left open . . .

Another prominent figure in the village was Habiba, a lively

woman of about twenty-six. (Plate XI). Related to the leading elders of the village and a grand-daughter of Monica, the lineage head, she was yet living alone in the small house (No. II), her husband being at work in the plains. She was tall, humorous and very popular. It was she who brewed a large quantity of beer from the two bags of grain I had brought from the plains as a present to the village when grains were not available in the hills at this time of the year.

She looked African all right, though her skin colour and certain facial expressions reminded me of Arab friends in Bombay and naturally of the strong Arab component in the East African coastal population. Her easy manners and energetic sense of organization and enterprise were certainly above average. One day she took me and my good interpreter-assistant William Mbena to her *shamba*. It was a large plot under shifting cultivation, planted with millets. We had to wade along, or in, a quite lively rivulet between thick undergrowths and high, majestic trees, before reaching the two steep slopes it covered. The field looked magnificent with sunlight playing on the huge stalks which shot high above our heads—and we were, the three of us, just a little below six feet. Habiba, thought her *shamba* must be one acre, but William's estimate was lower. Anyway, she was proud of it. She had herself cleared the field during August and September of the previous year, before her marriage. Her husband had helped her to burn the dried trees at the beginning of the hot season in October-November. The sowing had been done at the close of the hot season, in January, after his departure to the plains. She had done the work practically alone, putting four or five grains of millet into each finger-marked hole. After closing the holes, the top-mud had to be pressed into the ground. Alone again she had done the first weeding in February, but her two sisters and their husbands had lent a hand for the second weeding in March. Habiba said that the harvest was due in August or at the beginning of September and that it would be done with either the *panga*, the sword-like cultivation knife, or with the *mundu*—a sickle with a wooden handle. The gathering could be done two days afterwards. She expected her husband to return for threshing. Otherwise she would call once more upon her relatives for help. She expected to harvest four *debbes* (petrol cans) and one earthen pot full of grains, hoping that this would last her

for a year. William, however, had his doubts about these optimistic prognostications and thought that help would have to come from the two sisters' households. Nevertheless Habiba said that she would at any rate use two baskets for making *pombe*, the popular native beer, for the whole village, with her as the hostess.

Meanwhile the results of her proficiency as brewing expert were coming to fruition on my behalf.

One morning, my daily routine work of composing family genealogies and histories took me into the neighbourhood of Habiba's house. When Habiba saw me, she invited me to taste a little of the ripening brew. It was the first time that I entered her tidy three rooms, of which one and a half were temporarily converted into a brewery. I was made to sit on a European deck-chair and was formally introduced to the *pombe*. In spite of its moderate alcoholic content, it tasted to me bitter and sharp. But this was really beside the point. Habiba was proud of her achievement and I manifested as best as I could a not very genuine appreciation. On the other hand, I admired the tidiness of her home which was beautified by a *charpai*, a little hand-mirror and a few colour-prints from British or American magazines.

A great feast had been arranged to coincide with the day the *pombe* was to be declared perfect and ready for consumption. When that longed for day arrived, entertainments began in the forenoon. My first impression was one of disappointment. Every one turned up in as many of heavy European garments as he or she could muster. The effect was aesthetically disastrous. European gents' fashions have often been commented upon as out of date and out of purpose in a stream-lined functional setting, as a hang-over of a period in European history when the heydays of early capitalism and the industrial revolution made an ideal of the *petit bourgeois* with his *embonpoint*, his golden watch chain and his cigar, but with little relationship either to bodily prowess or to the less obvious roots of culture in traditional values. This criticism is valid in Europe. It is even more so in Africa. A dozen or two of African farmers in the traditional setting of their village, dressed in this old-fashioned European style, look like a caricature of early capitalism hurled into the strongly antagonistic background that thatched

roofs and 9,000-foot mountain peaks offer. The girls look ordinarily graceful and agile enough in their black *kaniki* cloth, even though it is now being tucked over the breasts to honour the European taboo on "nakedness". But for the feast, most of them had come in frocks and gowns, obtained from the old-clothes markets of the West. Habiba made no exception. (Pl. XI). The effect was that of a masquerade, but not of one which brought out the more colourful or humorous elements of the masked group congenial to the grand, stern beauty around . . . A sad caricature on the female side, almost as much as on the male ! . . .

Before I could properly mix with the festive crowd, I was led to the *Wa-Zee*, headed by Msumi Mwenye Mwua in a grand Arab *kanzu* which, if hardly more suitable to the African setting and climate than creased pants and black dinner jackets, was at least in greater stylistic accord with the dignified, old face and the tall, erect stature of Msumi.

I was taken in pomp to Habiba's house which was by now arranged for a formal reception. I had to drink from a small china cup the first sip of the now-ready beer. Being unaccustomed to alcoholic drinks, I was unable to make out any difference with my preceding trial. However, I enthusiastically declared the brew perfect.

Meanwhile the sun had risen higher and the wide angle of its rays made them quite strong though the air remained crisp and cool in the shade. The first *ngoma* rhythm rose. I had often heard *ngoma* performances since the magnificent one which Mr. Lubambula, the curator of the Kampala Museum, had given me and which had left me with a deep impression. Not all had been of a comparable standing. Some had even been quite bad indeed, especially the ones executed in "bush schools" where boys are taught marches and choir songs which they hammer with dry bamboo sticks and sometimes even iron rods on empty Mcbiloil cans, instead of using the specially prepared drumsticks, or even the fingertips, on softly tuned wooden *ngomas*. It would not be fair to say that the Kiperebetu *ngoma* orchestra belonged to this cruder type. There were traditional instruments, one of which reminded me of a special kind of drum which I had found among the Lyngngam on the Khasi and Garo Hill border in Central Assam. Hussaini, the young man who had earned part of the bride-price for his young wife in the

plains, seemed to act as musical expert. The performance was yet less powerful than I had hoped and expected. The dance followed the frequent pattern of circumambulations in several steps, men and women keeping more or less to themselves, and small children following like little dolls, often stumbling over their far too long and too numerous "sunday clothes". Habiba sometimes led the group with a genuinely superb stride which would have looked easier and more harmonious if it had not been hampered by a tight white blouse and a frock made of a printed *kanga* which was probably imported from either Japan or India, if not from England. As the heat grew with the rising sun and did not abate in the early afternoon hours, the drinking part of the feast became more prominent and the dancing part receded. I remembered a far more spirited *ngoma* at Mkonjowano on the Makonde Plateau. After five hours dancing and watching, I had gone to sleep at about 2 a.m. When, just before 6 a.m., I left my camp-cot to see the end of the feast at sunrise, I found the dancers still enjoying vigorously their rhythmic movements. Here, things were different. The cool evening saw a renaissance of the dancing, but by 9 p.m. everyone retired. On my enquiry whether this was the usual course for an Uluguru *ngoma*, I learned that in the days of old it did not use to be so.

"But then we all danced. All the Wa-Luguru."

"And now?"

"Mostly Muslims only. Catholics are not supposed to dance."

This answer recalled to me the remark my friend and assistant at Mkonjowano had made the day following the big *ngoma* there. I was then checking and supplementing the hurried notes I had jotted down the previous night. I was seeking his help in describing various steps and a little extra pirouette which two small girls had performed several times between the line of men and women. He answered my questions with an apologetic smile:

"Really, I know less about this than you. I had never seen in all my life a *ngoma* before yesterday. I am a Christian and son of a parson. I would have probably never seen any, had I not come with you."

More and more genealogies, interpretations, family stories and

anecdotes were daily entered into my blue note-books. I often felt very happy that the picture I had of things around me deepened, and took on local colours. At the end of my afternoons, interviewing with the help of William, we used to make a little detour before returning to the *mwitu*. Passing by old Mulugaluga's and his wife's house, we would stop for a while and have a brief chat. I had cleverly acquired a big beer bottle which I had filled with the local snuff. I had first bought the dried and twisted tobacco leaves from Msumi. Then, another expert pulverised and mixed them with the required ingredients. I had taken the habit of encouraging the subjects of my inquiries by offering around a little of that mixture during my interviews. What was left at the end of the day was given to the old couple on my homeward walk over the ridge.

Among the many details I got during those evening chats, I was one day informed that Mulugaluga and Mutsila Koga kept one *shillingi* as a treasured possession besides their few clothes, baskets, pots, hoes and axes. The coin would come handy for any special need, so it was not to be spent on snuff. My little gifts were a welcome "luxury" in these simple old lives.

Not all my days were confined to Kiperebetu. When I went with William to visit the village of his family and the mission station where he was employed as a teacher, my cook Rashidi's demands to visit his own parents became more insistent . . .

One night, my room was invaded by black *safari* ants of the large kind. Rashidi and his future brother-in-law rushed out with flaming leaf torches, to fight the seemingly inexhaustible armies of the aggressors. Other future in-laws joined but the vigour of the onslaught did not abate until the Hega sent to the compounder of the nearby dispensary for an anti-ant chemical which finally won the battle. At about two in the morning, I found a late but deep rest in the midst of black soot and white chemical salts. With the wide opened window shutters through which clear air and the incessant voices of the night entered, I fell asleep.

The single-minded devotion in fighting the stinging ants just to clear my quarters for the customary rest showed me Rashidi's more than usual goodwill. Though I did take photos of himself, his bride-to-be and her tiny sister, I felt that I owed him the day's tour to his father's village. There was really no professional reason

for me to go away from Kiperebetu and waste one of my precious few days. It was a mere pleasure trip, undertaken to please Rashidi and to show him my appreciation of his goodwill. And now, looking back on this period of my life spent in the Uluguru mountains, that day stands out as perhaps the happiest and, in a not easily definable way, also the most typically African day during those weeks.

Early morning, when we passed Kiperebetu, nobody had yet come out. The small *Cha-Mlungu*, the traditional shrine, stood solitarily on the other side of the village, a little round model house, awaiting symbolic token gifts of grain to honour the thought of God. We did not meet a soul on our way through deep shade gorges and over the undulating hills with the blue Uluguru peaks to our left, until we reached a homestead hidden behind elephant grass. Rashidi's elder sister and her husband who kept a wayside shop of matchsticks, cigarettes and bananas, greeted us. The scenery was beautiful. Bluish-purple blossoming shrubs lined the footpath into a deeper valley, on the other side of which stood the round house of the parents. The son's eyes grew quite shiny when he introduced me to his old father, lying sick on a *charpai* in the warmth of the morning sun. I felt a similar warmth in the old man's smile, even though it was clearly that of a setting star. He did not complain much about his ailment or the pains after the operation. Pretty soon the mother with a coloured *kanga* round her shoulders came, and we exchanged simple questions and answers till I was offered a meal of maize, spinach and eggs, in the cool, empty round room of the house. When the sun came down a bit and threw light into the inner yard, I took a few photos.

The father wanted to know whether I was satisfied with his son's services. He told me a little more about his operation down in Morogoro, but added:

"An old body cannot be made young again." Would I not speak to the District Officer so that Rashidi might get the post of a *mtarishi*, an office messenger, or may be that of a peon? He added that his son was not a Christian but that he had learned how to read and write. Would I recommend him to *Bwana Showri*? This term means literally Mr. Conversation but refers in practice to the District Officer whose duty it is to discuss all local problems as thoroughly and personally as possible. Remem-

bering Anthony Moore's tight, correctly set mouth, I could of course not make any promise positive but hoped that I might do something.

The way back was hot and we had a bath in the white, foaming waterfalls with the Uluguru peaks, now softened to a distant pastel grey, at our right. When we passed through Kiperebetu, old Msumi Mwenye Mwua was sitting on his *charpai* at the entrance of the round house, letting the late afternoon sunrays warm the bare chest. He smiled his quietly reassuring greeting and said that I had not come to take the complete inventory of Mulugaluga's house, as I had planned.

"You passed by in the morning without stopping."

I was quite proud that my absence had been noticed.

"You have been often with us and you slept many nights in the *mwitu*."

I thought it was the right moment to ask whether big rain-makers had once really been buried there. Msumi's eyes opened up a little more than usual. He glanced around before his knowing smile passed over me in silence. Then, after a while, he nodded :

"Yes, there were old men buried. That's true."

Going down the familiar footpath to the *mwitu*, I saw the last light of that day playing in the branches of the big tree in front of my window. They all pointed upwards, like the higher peaks which were now carved into the paling sky.

"House inventory" in my fieldwork routine, comprises, not only the enumeration of tools, weapons, garments and aluminium or enamel vessels which, with an odd mirror, a shaving set or a few colour prints, form the usual "movable property" but also an attempt at evaluating the amounts which have been paid either in cash, kind or labour, for the purchase of these objects and, if possible, a brief history of their acquisition. Such a history sometimes throws light on the motivation for the purchase of the commodities. Some, like foreign clothing for instance, fetch at times high prices, whilst still others like warm fur blankets for the cold nights, are now considered unnecessary . . . because their absence is not noticed by outsiders and hence does not bring about loss of prestige. To find out this and more requires long *showries*,

which are made livelier by the presence of an experienced and respected *Mzee*. When at long last one morning I got ready to take the inventory of House XII and hoped to find Msumi ready to come over to old Mulugaluga's and see what exactly he treasured apart from the *shillingi moja*, the *one* shilling in his house, I found Msumi sitting in front of his own round house with a few *Wa-Geni*—foreigners. They all wore black European jackets and felt hats with wide brims. Msumi had his *kanzu* and a black dinner jacket over it. For the first time I was struck by the uncertain and worried flicker in his old eyes. He scarcely looked at me when I passed by and appeared completely absorbed in his conversation with the *Wa-Geni*.

There were more of them in the upper village. They had camped under the tree near Habiba's house, kindled fires and were starting preparations for quite a sumptuous meal. A number of young women in European clothes, with occasionally one breast squeezed out over the tight décolletage to feed a baby, sat near a huge old lady in a ballroom gown. The broad hats and heavy jackets of the men gave them that look of officialdom and stiff distortion which tight sewn clothes produce so often on a non-European body. African figures are often proportioned and beautiful in their harmony if the comparatively thick neck and the roundish facial outlines are counterbalanced by the virility and the proportions of the shoulders, arms and bare chests, but look somehow fat and stuffed if the round face sits on a tight collar.

A tall man in the group got up, greeted me in a way due to an official, and said that all these people here were *Wa-Ganga*—medicine men—who had come at the request of the villagers:

"Too many people died in this country and there are other disorders also. This is due to evil charms." My interlocutor added that the money which they were collecting was to be handed to *Bwana Showri* in Morogoro.

The whole village was filled with wonderment and excitement. No one thought of house inventory that day. Many and in part contradictory narrations, interpretations and statements were made about the sudden appearance of the *Wa-Ganga*. The group, of about twenty, had come from the Rufiji valley and a fat man called Guwumali Murufiji pointed out that they were *Wa-Hehe*, thus tribal relatives of some of the Luguru clans which had migrated

from the south. It was explained how the newcomers give *usembe*, medicine, in the form of a white tasteless powder, of which a bit has to be swallowed, whilst the rest is placed on the "patient's" head. If the taker of the *usembe* possesses a secret charm, he or she gets dizzy, confesses, and even shows where the charm has been hidden. In this case, the Wa-Ganga take away and burn the surrendered charm and administer a second *usembe* which stops the client's "drunkenness" or afflictions. The Wa-Ganga then impress upon him that he should not take a charm into his house again, lest he should die.

The price of these two "medicines" had been fixed at either one shilling or one bag of rice or one chicken—whatever the client preferred to pay. Villagers believed that those who would refuse to pay will be accused of sorcery at the *boma* in Morogoro. They also thought that the collected money was to go to the treasury there.

I could certainly not bring myself to believe the last two assertions. However, they persisted in the many tales, told and retold during the next few days, when I tried to collect data on the unexpected visit, rather than on the inventory of House XII. This improvised study, however, turned out to be not quite so easy as one could expect. William, like his other Roman Catholic colleagues in the school, objected to the taking of the medicine and refused to surrender his cross and medals. The school teachers said that the Government did not dare to accuse them, that the Dutch fathers were strong enough to protect them. They did not pay. Abdullah Kungwa, the *mtarishi*, the messenger of sub-chief Hega, whom I had come to consider almost as a relation by virtue of the planned marriage of my cook, encouraged William and said that many people, including Muslims, down in the plains, refused to pay and that none of them had been accused of sorcery in the *boma*.

One afternoon I went with William to visit the house of a young woman whom I wanted to interview even though she did not belong to Kiperebetu proper. I had been told that she had five husbands and this lady's behaviour, almost as rare in East African family-life as Draupadi's in Indian mythology, seemed worthy of some anthropological attention. When we arrived at her house, two young men were working in front of the entrance. One of them was

cutting a wooden handle for a tool. We could not elicit many answers from these two, nor make sure whether they were brothers of the lady or, more in keeping with Draupadi's tradition, brothers themselves.

After a while she came and said that the *Wa-Ganga* had visited her earlier that day and had asked if she wanted the *shaitan*, satan, to be driven out of her. It would cost her fifteen shillings only. However, she did not have the fifteen *shillingi* and, moreover, as far as she knew, did not have any satan either.

Just as we had left the place, we passed two young *Wa-Ganga* and casually asked them where they were going.

"We have a good new medicine—not expensive, she may want it for ten shillings, but we force nobody to take it."

The next day all *Wa-Ganga* had disappeared as unexpectedly as they had come. A stale tiredness hovered over Kiperebetu. Msumi had still a worried look about him. Even though he was not in a mood to come along with me, I decided to go alone and take the inventory of old Mulugaluga's house. There was not much time left now. I had to finish a report to the Government on my observations made on the Makonde Plateau and I wanted to see Anthony Moore in Morogoro before his local leave which was soon due, to tell him about the *Wa-Ganga* and the rumours which were spread regarding their alleged ties with the *boma*. At any time I should get the news from the *mtarishi* that transport had been arranged for me and I had to be ready to leave at short notice.

The old couple was perhaps poorer than the average. Their riches amounted to two *gembe*, hoes worth Sh. 3 each, one *mundu*, knife estimated at Sh. 2, one wooden mortar, three bedsteads, five bamboo sieves, two pestles, three earthenware pots and three metal ones—all presents from various relatives, each with a little history of its own and altogether worth about Sh. 25 at the utmost. Of greater money value were the clothes including a long, floating Arab *kanzu* for Mulugaluga, whose wardrobe alone we estimated at Sh. 45-50, whilst his wife's very simple black *kanikis* with only one *kitingi*, a small coloured wrapper bought at the mission shop of Matombo in 1955 for Sh. 5, and three bead strings for 50 cents summed up to Sh. 21/50 all told. (Three shillings equal to two rupees and 1 Sh=100 cents).

After the complete inventory had been spread out and counted,

the *shillingi moja*, the one shilling, came to my mind and I asked where it was kept.

A sad little smile passed over Mulugaluga's wrinkled face. He had taken the medicine, he and also his wife. I wondered how it had been possible. Had she not to pay one shilling also? Mulugaluga answered with a disarming smile:

"She had one shilling. In secret. I always told her we could use one for a little snuff, once in a while. But she would never give it, as long as I kept mine in reserve. Now—both have gone with the *Wa-Ganga*."

I suddenly remembered my beer bottle which I had completely refilled with tobacco the day before the strangers had come and which I had quite forgotten.

Everything went fast afterwards. On my return to the rest house I found that the *mtarishi* had come up from the plains with the news that transport to Morogoro would be available for me the following Monday.

It was Friday. There was not a minute to spare. I had to pack up all my luggage at once as the Land-Rover was to come and take me down to the farm of my friends in the plains the following morning. When we had squeezed all the accumulated papers into the nearly bursting bags and suitcases, we had to wait a little while for the car. I thought of my snuff bottle. Neither William nor Rashidi, who was to be my companion, had the time to go over the ridge to the upper village. Knowing my interest in folklore, they started asking and answering *ndandi*, riddles, which in Kiswahili are known as *methali*. One runs like this:

"*Huku tamu—huko tamu. Kati kati—uchungu*": one end is sweet and the other end is (also) sweet. (But) the middle is sour.

Answer: "*Jua*": the sun, because during mornings and evenings the sunshine is pleasant. But in between it is too hot—"sour."

Another riddle was:

"*Nime—lima shamba—nime pata maboga mawili, tu*": I have cultivated the fields. I have just got two pumpkins.

Answer: "*Masiva*" meaning literally milk, but standing also for a woman's breasts. A reference to bride-price and the acquisition of a wife,

Rashidi added a riddle in Kiluguru :

"*Mzungo koka kaleka likoti*": the European has gone away and left an (old) coat behind.

Answer : "*Nyemba*"—a kind of fruit, full of small seeds inside.

We could not quite make out the point in this riddle. Rashidi put on his careful, cautious silence and the suspicion grew in my mind that the not very desirable seeds in the fruit might stand for the lice which are so often to be found in second and third-hand old clothes, and are such a frequent source of paratyphus and other infectious diseases in Africa.

But we were interrupted by a last visitor, dear old Mulugaluga himself. He wore his ceremonial *kanzu* and had come down to thank me for the many visits I have paid him and the numerous snuffs I had always offered, he said. There was this careful, sparing dignity and hesitation in his words which makes African demonstrations of affection so singularly free from exuberance as well as sentimentality.

"I have seen many *Wa-Zungu*. They give away old things. But none has shared their lives with us everyday."

I imagined the smile of Mutsila Koga when her husband would bring back home my beautiful bottle filled with fresh snuff.

8. *African Nature* *African* *Nationalism*

BESIDES the great linguistic differences which exist between different groups of peoples on the African continent, there exist also great cultural and physical differentiations, as for example between the Nilo-Hamitic and the Bantu speaking nations or tribes. Even sharper, and perhaps more dramatic, gaps are evident in the natural settings of several African regions, such as the Congo Valley and the moist West Coast, if contrasted with the Sahara and Kalahari deserts, or with the cool highlands of Morocco, Algeria, Rhodesia, Transvaal, the Cape and Kenya.

It now happens that political boundaries in Africa transcend linguistic or other cultural frontiers. Ghana and Guinea, for instance though they belonged to the British and French colonial empires, respectively, are nearer to each other from the African point of view, than either Ghana to British Somaliland or British East Africa, and Guinea to French Somaliland or the former French Equatorial Africa. The rain forests of the Congo Basin and parts of Uganda belong no doubt to one natural unit, quite distinct from the arid savannahs, even though these latter are politically part of Uganda. The present African countries have not been shaped by nature or indigenous affinity only, but also by the succession of various immigrants during the last few hundreds or even thousands, of years: Europeans, Asians and the permanently moving African peoples themselves: Hamites, Nilo-Hamites, Nilotics, Bantus, Sudanese, Koi-San, Pygmoids.

Yet—on the African, like on the South Asian scene—there is a greater all-continental affinity between the various geographical regions than there is, for instance, in Europe, even though Europe is so small for comparison with South Asia or Africa. It is therefore possible to speak of African nature and its extra-human quality.

Between my anthropological field studies among matrilineal tribes, I had a few occasions to travel either in the company of hospitable friends or alone. I was able to acquaint myself with the variety of East African nature and could remember with nostalgia

the unfulfilled dream of my childhood: to be an explorer of unknown countries and a scholar in the zoological field.

Once I was passing through a secluded, over-arching corner of deciduous forest when I came upon a one-man tent in "the bush." Europeans call all tree-covered country in Africa "bush," as if it were not real forest, though to me it is still jungle, in the sense in which the word is used in India. But in India I had never seen such a funny little tent as this: with no bath compartment, no yellow inner lining visible through the side canvas, rolled up to reveal two unusually large camp tables, covered with black steel boxes. They were perforated on top. An African servant in high rubber boots told me that the *bwana*, his employer, would be back shortly.

"With *something*," he added somewhat ominously, though with a humorous smile.

This proved to be true. A slim man appeared—manifestly a European. His piercing blue eyes were what struck me first. A live snake, dangling from his sharply bent right fist, was the second thing I noticed. As soon as he saw me, he opened one of the perforated steel cases with a swift movement of the free hand, deposited the snake, closed the box again, wiped his right palm with the left, then, turned and offered a handshake with typical south-European cordiality. His accent proved to be as English as his colouring, inherited from his mother, whilst the sharp curve of his nose and the loudness of his laughter bespoke paternal origins further East, from which his father, a local notable, had been uprooted in a revolution, to live later abroad. This the son told me over a cup of tea, mentioning that these events took place about seventy years earlier, though I would not have given him more than fifty or fifty-five years, at the outside. My host also disclosed rather proudly that, apart from being seventy, he was collecting some of the world's most poisonous species of snakes, for research institutes and zoos in America.

"Southern Tanganyika is one of the best places to find them," he chuckled. "They fetch excellent prices with the Yanks, which I welcome. My pension is not stupendous."

Opening one steel case after another, he produced black and green mambas with the familiarity of a pet-owner. He pointed also to a case which he did not open, mentioning the speciality of its occupant: that of spitting with deadly accuracy a blinding poison into the onlooker's eyes. But there were still others, like the

Gabon viper, injecting two complementary poisons simultaneously, thus rendering medical relief quite futile. These snakes were not all thin, wriggling creatures. Some seemed as thick as a hefty man's biceps and probably stronger. They had delightfully coloured brittle scales in all shades, grading from cream, through light yellow, brown, ochre and black, to a metallic blue, or purple. Some of these reptiles were aggressive in habit and would go for human beings, unlike their Indian counterparts which are dangerous only when attacked or unwittingly trodden upon. However, my host seemed rather fond of the show pieces in his murderous collection, which paid for the life he liked best.

His was certainly one of the less commonplace professions among the Europeans that I met in Africa. Yet I feel that it was in more than one way characteristic. This mixture of love for nature's beauty, hazardous adventure—and with it all a rather unexpected business sense. The European situation in Africa could be compared with that of a game warden's. It is these officials' sometimes devotedly fulfilled duty to protect big game, particularly elephants, from African *and* European poachers, but it is likewise their duty to protect (mainly African) agriculture from big-game incursions.

These are rather conflicting trusts. The Governments are doing all they can to "develop" their territories by introducing mechanised group agriculture, thereby annihilating, with tractors, drainage and poison, the last corners of nature's primeval equilibrium. Elephants, hippos or rhinos can in one night easily destroy with their several tons of living weight what months of labour have produced on a large field. The opposition is direct.

Thus, game wardens live in a permanently ambiguous conflict, which is all the more tragic if they feel a genuine friendship for Africans and attachment to "wild life," in its strange, strong reality.

What this reality and its power actually is defies description. It certainly goes far beyond tickling the predatory instincts of "sportsmen" with money, but it has also next to nothing to do with the pity, regret or wonder we feel before animals, suffering stoically, or dumbfoundedly, in zoos. Both attitudes are equally far from the reality of African nature and its scarcely transmittable experience—as far perhaps as one is from the vision of the southern sky and its radiant constellations, when one pokes one's

frose into a popular digest of Einstein's theory.

To bring this home, let me offer an example. Years ago at a western zoo I remember to have seen a giraffe. It seemed to me then an oversized cow on stilts, with an unnatural neck, sprouting to the length of a tree to support a small, protruding face with soft horse-like lips, strangely human eyes behind long lashes and, atop all these, two roundish, soft, little horns, growing like twigs from this mammalian tree. I still remember how, seeing all this, I had smiled inwardly at the medieval Arab poets who praised the supposedly angelic ladies of their hearts by comparing them to the stiff combination of a large cow and a moving tree. Funny, I had thought. That was years ago.

Now I remembered that moment, as I drove with a friend through savannah land, glimmering brilliantly in shades of ochre and olive. We passed umbrella trees, olive-green acacia groves, horizontally chiselled against the transparent blue lake in the distance. Over all this floated swarms of rounded clouds, thousands of them, all radiant with light against the limitless African sky.

Suddenly, I noticed a neck, almost human in its astonished upward movement, as with an inquisitive gesture it emerged spotted and warm above a high umbrella tree. It was as though a tree were suddenly to bend forward, to ask a question. I whispered to my friend and the car came to a stop. We were almost in front of the giraffe—the *twiga* they say in Kiswahili and other Bantu languages.

It was a large, hoofed animal, as it had been at the zoo, but when it approached yet nearer, its stilt-like legs moved with the swift ease of a gazelle. Finally it stopped, bending slightly forward, and a pair of large, liquid eyes looked down through long, lowered lashes upon us, as though through a pointed animal mask with two soft horns surmounting it. It was like a child gazing wonderingly and yet knowingly into the worried world of grown-ups.

A moment passed. The eyes turned away, followed by supple, successive movements of the bending neck and the warm shoulder muscles and then by elastic jumps of the legs. Already it had reached the distant acacia grove, where it now looked slender and small. Small and fragile like a gazelle—no, like a half-grown girl, rushing playfully away whilst glancing back with the eyes of an angel. Half angel and half animal of this world. A *twiga*! How well this Bantu name fitted the tree-like animal with its twigs! It was only then

that I remembered the medieval Arab love songs and their similes—but no more with a condescending smile.

It was the Africa of my vision—radiant with a light which shines also in the intelligent eyes of its peoples, where it sparkles all the more by contrast with the dark skin-colour, like the touch of the spirit blessing the darkness of matter.

A tragic conflict for the Europeans in Africa is that they are now beginning to understand and love what their forbears set themselves to destroy—now, when it is almost too late to reverse the process. It is a sort of Midas' curse, modernised. My host in the tent too, in his days, must have been drawn to Africa by some such vision as that which the *twiga* had opened for me. And starting from this, he had ended up catching weird poisonous snakes. In the India of his youth, at the turn of the century, he could easily have found a more profitable job than that he took in Africa. His choice however, had been for nature—God's own, unlimited garden, Africa. It had something of paradise about it in those days, a paradise before the serpent! . . . And little can the young adventurer have foreseen that the nature reserves of the not yet fully explored continent would turn into a sort of glorified zoos during his lifetime, and he himself into a snake-catcher, to supplement his old-age pension with dollars.

It is not only the quixotic temperaments among them, but all Europeans in Africa, who live in an ambiguous conflict involving the ideals of their situation and the policies of their Governments, on whose protection they depend. This does not mean that all game wardens are idealists, or all those engaged in the big-game business. Far from it! There are game-safari contractors, for instance. They provide tents, food (but not strong drinks), servants and their own personal experience as guides, against a lump sum which may vary anywhere between a lower limit of eighty or a hundred pounds and an upper, to your liking, far above that but still not including the costly Government shooting licences. The customers, many from America, pay for the kick they get out of danger and killing and the trophies they take home. That, in the ensuing conflict between game protection and hunting, the compromise is not always on the side of pure idealism, goes without saying. A young man told me during a casual railway conversation how and why he had poached two strictly protected ostrich eggs. He had wanted to replace two others

which he had broken as a small boy, when his now ageing father had returned from Tanganyika. The motivation may be understandable in itself. The fact, however, that the story was told to me, a complete stranger, speaks against the claim that Europeans, at least, consider poaching a seriously disreputable crime.

As among any other group of people anywhere in the world, there are of course different, very different, kinds of individuals among the Europeans in Africa. There are the "better ones and the mediocre ones," though it is not easy for an anthropologist to agree to such a terminology. But there are certainly Europeans who came to Africa because they felt attracted by the beauty of her nature, her vastness, her freedom and, above all, by her people and their culture. There are also the others, those who came, in greater number it must be admitted, to make money, to enhance the prestige of their own countries, to satisfy their craving for power which had become more and more difficult to satisfy in their original lands.

This dichotomy is the deeper reason not only for the tragedy of Africans, but also of Europeans in Africa: the "better" ones have to suffer for the actions of the "mediocre." Moreover, the examples given by the latter are eagerly followed and those given by the former only too often thrown to the winds by the young African nationalists themselves. The very idea of national parks, nature reserves, tribal reservations and a systematic study of traditional arts, social organizations, religions and other African values, was first shaped by one kind of foreigners, whilst the other kind came to make money as quickly as possible, no matter what the cost for the country as a whole would be. This looks as though Europeans destroy the very thing which attracted them to Africa, all the way over the seas or through the skies. For it is to destroy that they come. Sometimes it is carelessly, sometimes intentionally, but destroy they do. And this is true not only in their relations with African nature, but even more so with African culture.

Let us, however, consider yet another example of upsetting the equilibrium of nature. It may help us to grasp the more complex aspects of the problem at the human level.

The crocodiles of Lake Victoria were known to thrive on fish. Lake fish are valuable and could one day form the basis of a canning industry, thought some progressive development people. Thus

total war was declared on the Lake Victoria crocodile, in defiance of generally respected principles of nature conservation. After the immolation of the long-snouted reptiles, however, the edible fish diminished in Lake Victoria instead of increasing rapidly as expected. Nobody understood, until it was discovered that the favourite prey of the crocodiles was not the small variety of fish which men value, but its worst enemy, a bigger rapacious species which, now freed from the crocodile scourge, had multiplied rapidly and was threatening the survival of the more productive, but defenceless, small varieties.

Europeans value the great beauty of Africa. Yet they did, and still do, all in their power to blot it out. It is sometimes done by ruthless exploitation, as in the case of vast forests which have been cut down under flimsy pretexts, sometimes also by doing what is thought to be good, or what *is* in many cases good in itself but turns out not to be so in the peculiar setting of the country. For instance, it is a wonderful thing to increase health services and to decrease infant mortality. But these blessings turn into a curse against the people who have not been taught to check an ever-increasing population pressure by careful family planning and rational birth-control. We could easily find other examples of ill-applied, if not already ill-conceived, ideas taken from medieval Europe, which do not fit in contemporary Europe, America or Russia and are completely out of place in the Africa of to-day and of tomorrow.

Whilst I am writing this in the open doorway of a windowless but pleasantly cool mud-and-grass hut, children outside are playing merry-go-round to the tune of a Kiswahili song which could be rendered as something like this:

*One, two, three,
African children are we.*

A pan-African consciousness, including a sense of group identity with Negroes, that is to say with coloured peoples of African descent in the U.S.A., Brazil, the West Indies and elsewhere in middle America, is as yet a new thing. It will not be so by the time my little neighbours here grow up.

A pan-African consciousness need not necessarily have been

anti-European, or anti-foreign, at all. How often have I not been surprised at the solicitous joy Africans have shown when playing with children of European—or more frequently Indian—employers! To them both are equally foreign in skin colour, hair texture and other visible racial characteristics. The Kikuyu housemaid of my European hosts in Kenya insisted on purchasing each Sunday a quarter-pound of sweets, worth one shilling, for her ward, the two-year-old daughter of the house, though she had two children of her own in the round hut outside, and though her mistress would rebuke her gently for this uncalled-for sacrifice. This was a typical, rather than an exceptional case. By natural disposition, Africans are friendly to races other than their own. The position of the Arabs on the coast, of the British in Uganda, or the West African stand for the Free French, during World War II, are instances in point.

But what was (and still is!) the treatment the Africans or their cultures, get from these same foreigners in their own countries?

With due apologies for the over-simplification, inherent as it is in every schematisation, it may be said that European attitudes belong to one or another of the three typical patterns: (1) attempted extermination; (2) enslavement; and (3) a complete reversal of African values and with it the extinction of their cultures.

Bodily extermination, though carried out in Northern America, the Pacific Islands, and Australia, especially in Tasmania, has not succeeded in most parts of Africa, much to the regret of a certain type of White settlers. Only the unfortunate Bushmen, Hottentots and some southern Bantus, in the areas seized by the Boers, when they founded the present Union of South Africa, went the way of the American and Australian aborigines. A last great attempt at bodily extermination was made when Mussolini invaded Ethiopia. It failed despite the tens of thousands killed, owing to the tenacity of the Ethiopians and to the help they got, first from Sweden and later, in the framework of World War II, from the British, Americans and Free French. In the Portuguese and Belgian territories, extinction policies have not been systematically pursued, for all the truly blood-curdling mass-mutilation and slaughter of the matrilineal plant-cultivators without any footing of war, which prevailed

especially in the Belgian Congo, up to the time of World War I.

The second, and at times widely pursued, enslavement policy has resulted in the rather unforeseen existence today of tens of million African-descended Americans, with adopted American cultures and English, Portuguese or French mother-tongues. The European slave trade in West Africa, which produced this effect, did not Europeanise West Africa even to the degree that the Arabs changed the physical type on the East Coast. Mainly as a result of British humanitarian efforts, slave trade no longer exists even clandestinely on either coast. But in its place a policy of thinly veiled *de facto* enslavement is being vigorously pursued in South Africa. It has been given systematic form in the *apartheid* policy of a totalitarian government, which has worked out racial laws in comparison with which even the Nuremberg Laws of by-gone notoriety seem moderate. The attempt is to "keep the African in his place,"—to serve the White eternally in "locations"—working-class camps for Africans—far removed from so much as the sight of the Boer *Herrenvolk*.

And a lucrative "loaning" of cheap African labour to the South African Union goes hand in hand with forced labour in the two Portuguese territories, Mozambique and Angola, despite the Portuguese pretence that these colonies are integral provinces of Portugal. This pretence, it is true, results in the acceptance as full Portuguese citizens of a small minority of Africans and Portuguese-Africans, provided they have adopted the Portuguese mother-tongue, dress, religious observances and behaviour pattern—and have money. In the Belgian Congo, a kind of economic caste structure, it appears, has been attempted, involving separate town-planning and a large-scale immigration of the Belgian lower middle class. Recent fast changes there may have unforeseeable consequences. However, in other countries, this policy brought disaster as for instance, in the case of the French and Italian possessions in North Africa. It is hardly pursued by the French and British Governments south of the Sahara, excepting in the "White Highlands" of Kenya, in Central Tanganyika and especially in Southern Rhodesia. The two greatest colonial powers have not favoured an open enslavement policy for over a hundred years now.

The attempt at a complete change of culture—in fact, a de-Africanisation of Africa, however, has its centre in these territories.

And here the attitude that Europeans generally adopt towards the natural beauty of the continent is in evidence. It is a kind of frustrated love, or love-hate, which tends to destroy by its mere presence what it loves and even what it is trying to protect.

This, in fact, is the real problem of Africa to-day. For attempts at either bodily extermination or enslavement are doomed to failure in our days of intercontinental policy involvements.

Cultural de-Africanisation, however, is different. It has the equal approval both of extreme nationalism and of Communism. It is pursued alike by France and Britain, though with different goals. The French pattern resembles the attitude of the Portuguese towards their *assimilados*, though it is much broader based. A growing number of African deputies have been officiating and taking an active part in politics in Paris. The British pattern shares elements with the Belgian concept of economic segregation, but adds to these the positive values of indirect rule, development and education for self-Government. The colour-bar and White-settlement immigration are acknowledged as outmoded, except in the Rhodesias. The British felt committed to the already settled White farmers and the numerically far larger Indian communities brought in during the heyday of British Imperial colonialism. These and the admitted goal of self-government can fructify only in the setting of a multi-racial harmony. The facile solution of partition, on the Indian model, would in Africa be even more costly in terms of economy, human lives and general suffering. The European settlements, each with a population of ten to twenty thousand, are far too small and isolated, and the Indians, too scattered and too specialised, as shopkeepers, mechanics and clerks, to form self-contained units—let alone independent states !

Various different strands of human culture are too inextricably intertwined in the fabric of African cultural configurations today. It is no longer possible to sort them out and reconstruct the scene in monochrome webs. What, then, is the alternative ?

Multi-racial relations may be built up on the crocodiles-big fish-small-fish pattern of Lake Victoria, but this could hardly be described as a harmony, even when there is equilibrium. And in fact the equilibrium, such as it is, is destined to be disturbed once the crocodiles of the all-powerful foreign administrations withdraw, as is their avowed aim,

However there remains yet another, and more real, kind of harmony: that of self-directed and voluntary cultural co-operation. This is based on the specifically human ability to understand, imagine and actually to love beings other than oneself, with *other beings* also including other *cultures*.

In theory, this is the essentially Christian approach, as it is, broadly speaking, the Islamic. Indeed, the majority of Africans are now converted either to one of the Christian Churches, or to Islam. But has this mass-conversion worked for the achievement of cultural harmony, or for the extinction of African value concepts with a view to their replacement by those of the proselytisers?

Everything African, from clothing styles, ornaments, dances and music, to forms of marriage, family organisations, political systems and initiation rituals—in fact, every expression of the African genius, beginning with its keen sense of beauty and ending with its quite unmagical herbal medical treatments has been condemned as un-Christian and also, to a somewhat lesser extent, as un-Islamic. All this is virtually taboo to a convert. The African student, who after his return from England, saw in my presence, for the first time in his life, a *ngoma*, was struck by the outstanding beauty and rhythmic co-ordination of the performance. It was not a modern rumba of a sort, but a traditional dance inspired by the old, sacred initiation ritual. It was stern and restrained. I have heard slow, balanced drummings soar to the stars through the branches of sacred trees, in a gong-like majesty of incomparable beauty. There was nobility of sound in this like the liquid silver of the moon's rays on a river—something scarcely of this world.

It would be misleading and unfair to identify the French or British Governments with this attitude. It is being discarded even by some church organisations. There have been exhibitions of African art in Paris and London since decades. And colour-bar going as far as ostracism on account of inter-racial marriages is a thing, more or less, of the past. But it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that to the average administrator the proof of the African capacity for self-government lies in the wholesale adoption of French or British values, culture and civilisation. There still lingers the hope of producing dark-skinned, frizzy-haired Frenchmen and Britishers.

The Africans have naturally seen through this. Some have drawn

the conclusion that a complete destruction of all African values and cultures can alone lead to freedom and independence. And now they work for this destruction more ruthlessly even than the Victorian missionaries.

Among the first victims are the artistic, emotional, womanly qualities of African culture. In fact the position of the African woman, formerly strongly entrenched in matrilineal social systems stretching in a "matrilineal belt" from West Africa, through Ghana, Nigeria, Belgian Congo, and Northern Rhodesia, right up to Tanganyika, undergoes a rapid, and for it unfavourable, process of patriarchalisation. Instead of defending African values, the young men charge the foreign administration with slowness in their policy of Europeanisation.

One day, Julius Nyerere, the successful leader of the Tanganyika African National Organisation, held a mass meeting at Newala when I was there. He asked what the British had done for the country during the last forty years, since they had taken over from the Germans, in 1918?

"How many among you here have completed *schule*?" (the German term for primary education being still current in Kiswahili here). A dozen or more hands went up.

"How many have completed their secondary education?" Fewer hands were raised.

"And how many have been to the London University College, Makerere, which the British have built in Uganda?" No hand went up and the leader continued: "There you are, the British say Tanganyika is not fit for self-government yet. It is true. But it will never be, as long as the foreign administration continues. Only by trying and experimenting with self-government can we become fit for it, can we achieve it!"

That sounds fair enough—unless the "experimenting" means the destruction of the last still living values of African cultures. Once I was told that the Native Authority (!) of a neighbouring district had recently resolved, first, on the abolition of matriliney and, second, on that of drum-beating as a signal for council meetings. The first abolition will lower the position of women, the second will deprive the whole community of a source of rhythmic orderliness and beauty which those most matter-of-fact foreign administrators, the British, had taken over as part of official

procedure. But to the eager young men, both martiliny and drum-beating smack of too much emotion, of traditionalism and backwardness. They think they must go.

The old story of Lake Victoria comes to one's mind with all the more vigour in view of the far more ancient pedigree provided for it by Kautilya's *Arihasastra*. This speaks of the "disorder . . . implied in the . . . matsyanyaya"—referring to what was, even in those far-off times, the "old proverb of the fish," to the effect that the strong will swallow the weak, unless the latter can resist under the protection of a *dandadhara*, a wielder of authority (Book I, Ch. X, Sec. I, 19). In other words, you remove the crocodile of foreign domination, merely to foster the rapacious fish of anti-cultural, aggressive nationalism—and the productive, small fish soon find themselves in danger of extinction. It is the old sad story.

Yes—but are human value systems and the cultures that they produce exclusively and hopelessly subject to the kind of law by which crocodiles and fish are ruled? Are they?

Whilst staring wonderingly into the dazzling African light, something swift and slender crosses the field of the mind. Something of unusual beauty and harmony—the *twiga*, the giraffe.

It is not a large, spotted cow, not a stilted stork, not a questioningly moving tree—nor even a horse-mask with soft lips and two small horns, like twigs, on top. Nothing of the kind, yet it is all this together. A slender, supple being, of harmony and beauty, with the ability to unite its many different qualities in the light of a pair of large, angelic eyes.

Has heaven worked this miracle—or nature? And is it beyond the shapers of human culture to reproduce it in tangible organised form?

9. *The Moral Male*

I was travelling once more along the west coast of Lake Victoria where hundred years earlier Speke and later Stanley had passed in their search for the Nile sources, discovering thereby the *Nyanza*—this great lake. The passenger boats ply at about four thousand feet above sea level, which means that the climate is bearable even during the hottest months, between Christmas and April. Here you can take a week's round trip over a blue, liquid mirror, the size of Ireland. You cannot see from one shore to the other, but you wind your way through swarms of islands, reminiscent of the Aegean or Adriatic sea, and along park lands on the shores, which recall to European travellers their homelands, whether it be Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria or Italy. Among all this you meet an occasional hippopotamus which reminds you of nothing so much as your childhood's picture books about Africa !

During meals on board, served by African boys in white Arab *kanzu* and red fez, at meticulously clean tables laid with starched linen, an ex-naval officer on the boat told me about his war memories, mentioning the Battle of Norway first, because he had seen my mail from Scandinavia, then about the Battle of Britain and the Battle of Burma.

"Oh, you also know the East?" So our conversation grew lively. We remembered Assam and the view from Tiger Hill at Darjeeling, and Kanchenjunga. And then the South Indian temples where the Bharata Natyam dance was once performed by *devadasis*—who now perform only at embassies in New Delhi, or in the concert halls of New York and Moscow.

The narrative was told by a sensitive warrior who tried his best to hide his own emotional background when he summed up his experiences of war:

"You have got to pretend to like it. In a way you do, I suppose, so long as you are very young . . . Probably we have to, if we want to keep a decent home somewhere—to keep civilization going."

Bukoba (Map I, p. 8) had attracted me so much the first time I saw

it the preceding year that I had decided to break my journey there. I was glad to see the town again, because I had found interesting elements for my research on the changes in the life of modern, contemporary, African women. Almost at the beginning of my African tour in 1957, I had heard about the place with reference to "modern matriarchy" in Bukoba, which did not sound quite credible to me at that time.

"There are emancipated African women earning money abroad and coming back to buy land which they own in their individual capacity."

This piece of information was linked with a story of independent girls who wanted to leave their district on the west coast of Victoria Nyanza to earn money. Young men of their tribe had tried to prevent the girls' initiative by picketing the lake boats. But, as the story went on, the girls had pooled their resources and chartered an aeroplane which brought them from Bukoba to one of the big cities on the seacoast. I had received the information at Nakuru, the small provincial town of the White Highlands in Kenya. My informant was a very busy and sober looking English woman, a medical officer. She took me in her self-driven van to the Venereal Disease Clinic of the municipal hospital. The sister-in-charge was a ruddy Scotch girl and the nurse a tall African with a mop of frizzy hair under her starched cap. They introduced me to a group of their patients who had come voluntarily for examination or treatment.

The friendly, high-pitched voice of the African nurse translated my questions into Kikuyu, Kiswahili or Lu-Haya. There was no condescension in her voice. The acquisition of a residence pass seemed to be the biggest problem for the girls. Yes, of course, in Kenya there were separate pass laws for Africans. All the time there one was reminded of "The Emergency," of the Mau Mau . . . I wondered whether these women had to bribe subordinate officials to get passes? The prettiest among them said no and began to talk. She had some savings, hoped to return home, and purchase a *shamba* with banana, coffee trees and groundnuts. She wanted to work it herself and spoke with a somewhat rustic self-reliance, which seemed characteristic of these tallish women, with their cotton shawls, printed red, dark blue or black, in tribal patterns. Some were also tattooed on cheeks or chin with the slanting angles

of tribal marks in dark blue, and none of them looked like helpless slaves either of individuals or of society at large. I could not help remembering, and mentally contrasting, their opposite numbers in India whom I had seen as passive objects of social work. What a difference ! Those hushed and half-starved Indian children—victims of money-makers, of men engaged in immoral traffic—and here these African peasant types, swiftly responding to a joke with easy laughter. I thought it fitting that they should be planning a future as peasant farmers.

“ You remind me of a delegation which we had recently out here from home,” chuckled my guide with a sympathetic tilt of her thoughtful head, “ except that those good gentlemen did not understand the professional position of our patients in this particular ward and consequently took them to be typical peasantry, colourful, though, and,” she added, “ we did not care to disappoint them by going into explanatory details. They were men, after all, and very moral ones, we thought.”

The Scottish sister tightened the starched collar under her strongly cut, ruddy face ;

“ The Nandi girls often turn ayahs, even get qualified as nurses. They're hard-working and reliable. The Wa-Ziba and Wa-Haya too, with their pleasant manners. Like the one you were talking to, just now. No wonder they want to get back to their home. It is the most beautiful part of all East Africa. You would think you were among the Scottish lochs ! ”

Community Development is one of the most modern methods of social integration and its activities are prominent in all East Africa. Everywhere I have been, in Kenya or Uganda, on the Makonde Plateau or in the Uluguru Mountains of Tanganyika, I have seen development at work, either to solve problems of irrigation or to put across to reluctant peasants the necessity of terraced ridge cultivation in the fight against soil erosion. Everywhere Africans, as soon as they are given an opportunity for education, show themselves eager to learn. The desire for learning has grown into a passion and sometimes even stands in the way of well-meaning efforts in the Social Development Department. One of the European staff members in Tanganyika who knew similar institutions in

other countries and on the continent, complained:

"African women come to our clubs *only* to learn and for no social reasons at all. They want to learn everything, from reading and writing or maths to political science, economics and anthropology, much as they learn baking pastries, sewing on buttons, and stitching or knitting woollen baby-clothes. Incidentally," she interrupted herself, referring to the African babies, "their poor kids then have to wear thick, pink woollen clothes, when we would let ours play naked—in *this* climate!"

Switching back to the clubs of grown-ups and their problems, she repeated :

"They want to learn everything and exactly the way it is being done in Europe. Once they have—off they go and the club is forgotten. It is not their own. We are missing something that is part of their tradition; I do not know what it is. The plural wives of a chief have more social cohesion between them than the equally African members of any club that we are sponsoring."

The African desire to learn and the European incapability to offer an emotional background to it all: that is a real problem.

Are our emotions so paralysed? Or our feelings so inhibited? Do we see things from one angle only, when in fact there are two—or many more?

Moving with British community development officers in Bukoba brought me back to the problems of emancipated women and eventually prostitution. Prostitution, as a social evil has been with us for the last five thousands years now. It is since less than fifty years that it has become a problem for East Africa. Its appearance there generally, as a result of culture contact, raises important questions for a mankind trying to find its way towards harmonious living. In the endeavour to see things objectively, we must remain as little prejudiced by slogans from left or right, from black or white as possible. When immigrants from Europe and Asia came into East Africa, they spread their modes of life and brought along with technology a good deal of stress and distress to the native peoples who have now got to work out modes of adjustment in sometimes rather unexpected ways.

An example of the kind is offered by the women of the Haya tribe in this markedly patrilineal, even patriarchal area. These women are comparable to the famous Wa-Tusi in neighbouring

Ruanda-Urundi, or the Ankole kingdom in the equally neighbouring Protectorate of Uganda. Like their Kikuyu sisters in Kenya, they bear the brunt of the burden in agriculture. It is hard toil from morning to night, with no reward, except the income from ground-nuts, which are a minor crop as compared with bananas and coffee plants. The benefits derived from the latter are the prerogative of the family's male members, whatever hard work the women may have put in for it. There is also no inheritance for women from either their fathers' or their mothers' families—no clan-names, no property rights and very little in the way of entertainments or fun. The men are lazy and so fond of the gourd-bottle that they take it along even on their first bicycle ride in the morning. There is a surplus of women and this is aggravated by the missionaries' insistence on monogamous marriages, but is tempered by the ability of most Haya women to make good maid-servants or nurses abroad.

Since World War II, an increasing number of these girls have gone to live in towns with European communities to earn money. Once out of job, plenty of offers come their way to work for, or live with, a single man. And African men, too, in now ever-growing numbers, are working away from tribal areas. The term "prostitute" does not always fit here—even when there are frequent changes of partners. It does not always come to walking the streets, or to a system of male "owners" who rent out their living property for temporary use by others, in comparison with which the temple dancing now abolished in India appears as a humane piece of social planning in the past. The *devadasis* cleaned and adorned with flowers the temples to which they were attached. They were taught singing, dancing and instrumental music. Some of them were actually keepers of a remarkable tradition of art and religious lore. They and their children had, in the old tradition, a socially defined position which was not without social obligations and dignity. And the temples made provisions for old age and prevented overcrowding of the profession, quite apart from the fact that relations with men were frequently restrained and seldom indiscriminate.

It is of some importance to African problems to examine how this system has been legally prohibited in India. People there felt hurt, when Europeans or Americans of Miss Mayo's bent of mind coined the hostile term "temple-prostitution." Nobody wants to be branded as immoral. But the reaction to the slander was neither

defence of the good, nor reform of the bad, elements in the system, but its complete prohibition. The word temple-prostitution was ideologically used against Hinduism, so the whole institution had to disappear as quickly as possible. This happened before the British left. It did not occur to the reformers to apply the Gandhian principles of non-violence and self-purification to the males, involved in the whole business. On the contrary, they came down on the females, with the full weight of the legal arm. The history of the "oldest profession"—as old as city life, or specialized male professions—repeated itself. Immoral traffic spread rapidly, once the system was prohibited. Moral fanatics appeared, trying to introduce in India the police system of individual persecution of prostitutes as criminals. Even some Indian women social workers advocated this outmoded system, though the new Indian Constitution stands against it. A few who had studied the handling of similar problems in Sweden and other continental countries, realized that police measure against prostitution only multiplied its evils, and they felt that the temple organization of dancing girls was perhaps the lesser evil when contrasted with the present situation which drives the victims of prostitution underground and thus directly into the hands of pimps, procurers and brokers of human life.

Compared with this Indian, or European situation, African "prostitutes," or what goes by the name, seem less slave-like, though it may sound surprising to those who think of Africa as almost synonymous with slavery. The Bantu usage of the term *umalaya* rather approximates to "emancipation," in spite of its Arabic connotation, and a *malaya* is, in Kiswahili, any unmarried woman who earns her living. This may be done as a mistress, housekeeper, maid-servant or nurse, much as in any other profession, from sales girl, typist, or clerk, to Government servant, community development officer or medical doctor. The often misleading translation of *malaya* as prostitute is used by not too sympathetic Europeans as well as by certain African males.

To come back, now, to the independent women of the Haya tribe, they had made money in towns, returned home, taken the chance and acquired landed property in their own rights. This was a new privilege which formerly few women enjoyed, among them, for instance, princesses of the Nilo-Hamitic aristocracy, or female *shamans* through whom the deity is supposed to speak. Some of this newly created

class of peasant women later married landless but industrious men of their choice and "lived happily ever after." Going abroad and making money thus came into fashion. Haya women abroad acquired reputation as nurses, nannies or ayahs, as well as for their pleasant manners, and it was this reputation which had reached me even in far-away, Mau Mau shattered Kenya. But patriotic young Haya men take a poor view of this fame—a fact which need not surprise us when we remember the effect which the term temple-prostitution had on legislators in India during the 'thirties.

History has a way of repeating itself. Was the response to be a campaign for self-restraint among men? For improvement of labour conditions at home? For a higher status, or a share in family property, for married women? Or, perhaps, for allotment of the bride-price to the young woman herself, as Islamic Law for instance ordains, instead of to the bride's father? Nothing of the kind! The young men hit upon an entirely fresh idea. In some tribes they tried enforced repatriation with Government support, though this was later withdrawn when its misuse became apparent.

The situation in Buhaya was different. The only practicable way from Bukoba on the western shores of lake Victoria (Map I, p. 8) to any of the East African railway systems, and through them to the big cities, is on lake boats, on one of which I had come myself. Disembarking at Bukoba port, I had noticed one or two rather independent-looking African girls, with fashionable leather bags, dangling on straps from shapely, rounded shoulders. They were greeted quite warmly at the port and without any sign of public disapproval.

I could not verify the story of women said to have chartered a plane, because they had been prevented from embarkation to over-lake destinations, but instead heard of a particular woman, now in town, who had fought it out at the harbour, years before. She was the daughter of a former chief, apparently of Nilo-Hamitic ancestry and had been unhappily married. She had wanted her only son to be educated. So she had tried to travel by boat to the nearest railway station and from there to one of the big towns. Picketers had prevented her embarkation. She had demanded a police warrant, but there was none. So she had gone back and appealed to the authorities to ensure her right of free movement as the citizen of a democratic country. Several other women had

then stood their ground with her and the picketing had finally collapsed.

Before I succeeded in meeting the heroine of this story, I had interviews with several males of the tribe. I went for instance, to the court house of the Native Authority Council, which is a semi-governmental body. I found it imposingly perched on a hilltop, commanding a magnificent view over the green rolling slopes which are interspersed with natural rock castles of Bukobite, a local stone. These rocks looked as though giant children had been playing a game with pebbles the size of houses, all over the lake shores. Beyond was the blue mirror of Victoria Nyanza—a giant fusion of all the lovely lakes of Europe.

In one of the rooms commanding this splendid view sat an elderly African official who was ready to reply to my questions about the picketers. "Yes, yes. Our young men want to keep them here by force—and then what? Marry them off? The missionaries won't have plural marriages. Organise a co-operative, like that of the Coffee-Growers' Association? All right. But where are the land, the organisers and the money for unwilling workers? Each wants her own private *shamba*. Some talk of pass laws for women. This may prove the thin end of the wedge of *apartheid*. Is that what our eager young men are after? To return to the short but bad enough period of slavery through which our country was forced to pass during the last century or two?" We talked for a while about slavery in the past and then returned to present problems: "We ourselves are to be blamed. We men. Why do we treat our women the way we do? If they had a better home, they wouldn't want to go abroad!"

This native authority officer in his long, Arab *kanzu*, looked quite worried, but brightened up to a broad smile, as he sent me off by car, with another younger official, to meet the returned ex-malaya, the former chief's daughter.

The atmosphere became lighter, easier. We met her in town—a strong, well-built, but no longer young woman. She gladly came along in the jeep to show us her little farm out in the country. At first she made as though to sit down behind on the hard back benches of the car, but agreed with easy poise when I invited her to sit by my side in front. Outside the town she stopped the car at a rural shop for bananas, matches, cigarettes and beer. The place was very simple, but tidy and clean, and drinks were offered us before we

went up to the farm. There a straight path led to one of the customary mud-and-wattle houses, with five small rooms, including a kitchen and a bedroom at the back. The floors were covered with dried grass, whose perfume reminded me of summer in Austria. On the walls were colour prints of Queen Elizabeth, the Duke of Edinburgh, St. Anthony and a Swiss landscape with snow-covered peaks.

"Just like our Kilimanjaro or Mount Kenya, isn't it?" said my hostess.

She also showed me her neatly fitted bedroom with its spotless mosquito net and afterwards her *shamba*. There were good compost pits, and dead banana leaves had been carefully collected to cover and manure the roots of living stems; the coffee trees were bending, their branches trained horizontally so as to bear abundant fruit. A quiet, elderly man in heavy soldier's boots was introduced as friend and life companion. She had settled down with him on her return to her tribal homeland, now that the education of her son was finished. The boy, incidentally had found a good job as a clerk in Kenya. He was thinking of marrying an educated Kikuyu girl there.

"That way," his mother concluded, "he won't have a wife of our tribe, poor chap; but what Haya girl would want to go off to Kenya? There are pass laws for Africans, aren't they?"

I confirmed this and we all sat down chatting. When I mentioned the Community Development Clubs for women, the response came soon enough: "Yes, yes, I know them. But they are not very friendly to a *malaya* and they also can't teach me anything that I have not learned already. I can read and write—see!"

So I have her signature in my notebook. It is written in English script. Her elderly life companion was distantly polite and the young man who had come along with me as interpreter tried to make out that the picketing of our hostess, years before, had been a regrettable technical error, as she had always been a thoroughly respectable lady; but he added that the prevention of potential prostitutes from lowering tribal prestige was a very good idea indeed and should never have been stopped. When general silence followed his expostulations, he continued rather heatedly: "Why should anybody pass remarks against our tribe? Why shouldn't there be pass laws for women? We could then stop them from going and

living as prostitutes in towns! There are pass laws for all Africans now in Kenya. Even for men! Why shouldn't there be any for unmarried girls? They are after all women. Mere women!"

Being rather warmed up now, he pointed, in the highly expressive and hence frequently copied African manner, which I had already adopted myself, with pursed and forward-extended lips, towards our hostess: "Her case of course was quite different. That was merely a regrettable mistake."

She did not contradict. Instead she asked me to come along and pay a brief visit to her neighbour's house. It was somewhat bigger, and, in Arabic fashion, whitewashed. Here too there was fresh dried grass on the floors, but the pictures on the walls seemed rather more costly prints, illustrating Arab traditions in a 19th century style of voluptuous historicity. The owner of the house was a Muslim woman who, in spite of her visible tendency to put on weight, seemed agile and full of fun. Recently she had retired from Dar-es-Salaam where she had apparently lived in much greater luxury than this. She wrote in a clear Arabic script with correct diacritical signs. These two neighbours seemed to be good friends. They had reintegrated themselves into their African tribal background, though their past would hardly conform to the demands of the moral males who had tried to hold up the tribal reputation abroad. These two were quite happy to be left alone and cared little about organisations, politics, or the clubs which the British Government was trying to bring into being for African women.

What will be their fate, and that of so many other women in their country, once the young men of today are ministers of an elected, responsible Government? And what will be their fate in an altogether independent Tanganyika? In a Tanganyika as independent as today's Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Ethiopia or Egypt?

Will there be pass laws for women?

That would no doubt cause a problem even though a problem for "mere women."

As far as technical advance is concerned, the principles of applying the latest achievements, rather than outmoded models, is often, but not always, being followed. Motor cars and aeroplanes penetrate now many an area where the railway, even the bullock cart,

are still unknown. In numerous places in Africa, which never enjoyed the benefit of a hospital before, the very first institution of this kind, built today, is equipped with the latest X-ray block and other up-to-date medical aids which would be quite revolutionary innovations in hundreds of old established hospitals in Europe. However, this principle, good in itself, occasionally produces unsatisfactory results. Immovable glass panes may be useful in cold and tropical countries alike, provided they go along with their necessary complement, central heating—and cooling systems, respectively. But what to think of the same immovable glass panes in a way side rest-house without, of course, any such air-conditioning system? And what of the shiny, but unfunctional appliances in luxury trains? Such ill-applied newest gadgets, fads and what-nots apart, the principle of utilising the latest inventions in technology is being acknowledged so far as the merely mechanical side of the matter is concerned, though many social planners realize now that other problems are involved here in the sphere of human relations.

One could ask whether the principle of applying the latest, best suitable and least disruptive items of innovation could not be also followed in the sphere of social organization? In a number of continental countries, like Sweden for instance, where experiments have been made at tackling the problem of prostitution, the old police system of hunting down prostitutes like criminals, has been abandoned. Such a system has the disadvantage of exposing women of the profession to a double method of persecution at the hand of pimps on the one side, and of possibly corrupt policemen or officials, on the other. After the first world war, a policy of personal freedom, coupled with education in the development of a sense of responsibility, was introduced. The experiment proved that a more humane and less revengeful approach to the problem reduced the number of the victims, improved their economic status, and made their return to other modes of earning a living more hopeful. It should be noted that these encouraging results are obtained in the atmosphere of protestant northern Europe.

Potentially, African societies would even be a better field for the application of such methods, because prejudices and hatreds are

not yet so deeply ingrained in the minds of the people as to make them see the prostitute as a wicked sinner, rather than as a victim of social conditioning. Without prejudices it is much easier to size up the situation for what it is: the result of social complication, division of labour and the operation of the law of supply and demand. As long as there are big towns and industrial regions with concentrations of single men, earning considerably more money than attractive young women, the bare fact of prostitution will continue to exist, whether the name given to it, is a poetic one, as it was in ancient Greece, India and Japan; an ugly one, as in the modern western world; or the euphemistic one of easy divorce and re-marriage, as for instance in communist countries.

To the unprejudiced African, a *malaya* is not yet a wicked, outcast criminal. She is no doubt an unusual form of adaptation to changed conditions, such as the contact with non-African immigrants has brought about. Africa would be an ideal place to use the latest methods which have already proved successful elsewhere. However, under moral pressure, applied by outside agencies, some Africans with an incomplete knowledge of the problem tend to adopt the narrow-minded and inhuman methods which Europe is now trying to discard.

May be, the African genius for social structuring, which in the past has created so many original political systems among purely preliterate societies, might be successful once more in this field. The young African will to live and to create its own African ways of life has a good chance of success, especially if it makes full use of the matrilineal concept with its power to condition personality harmoniously into culture and to integrate the individual—both female and male.

10. *The Point of Honour*

ON arrival in Kampala, at the northern end of my lake-voyage, Professor Southall took me to Makerere College and it so happened that I was put up in the same flat which I had occupied the preceding year. I enjoyed the tidiness of its two rooms and its little attached kitchen, and I appreciated the hot tub bath, followed by a really strong, cold shower. I loved the calm research laboratory atmosphere in the East African Institute of Social Research and the quiet hours I spent in the well organized library. Everything was exactly as before. Yet everything seemed to me changed.

On my previous visit to Makerere, I had delivered a lecture about women's rights in India, and one of the African girl students had asked lively questions. She had since become a teacher, and, on my return to the campus, invited me to dinner with one of her colleagues. Her official quarters were completely of the western functional type. From crockery and china to the content of our conversation—all conformed to this pattern, only the house maid was introduced by the hostess as a clan-sister.

When, at the end of the evening, I went back to my flat and saw the Southern Cross high-up in the sky, I suddenly realized that I was still in Africa, in the Africa of the Makonde Plateau and the Uluguru Mountains! What had changed in Makerere was not so much the campus itself, but my point of view in seeing it, after one year of close contact with *real* Africa.

Happily, every morning when the first sunrays pierced the thick blanket of Victoria Nyanza fog, the birds, as before, called out their metallic or wooden cries. But they did not speak of the bush, of the rain forests, of the dark-green plantain groves. Now they reminded me of something I had known much longer than Africa. It was the zoo of Schœnbrunn in Vienna. As a child I used to go with my sister and our *fraulein* there for the daily morning walk. There I dreamed in front of the tropical aviary that one day I would be an ornithologist, travelling to far away countries, like Persia, India, and of course—the “Dark Continent.” In those distant childhood days,

my main interest was centred on nature, animals and especially birds. But I was already interested in the subject of my later chosen profession, namely the peoples of overseas. I imagined them beautiful to look at, colourful as our peasants in their *trachten*, the national costume in the Austrian hills, and I thought of them as certainly different from the ordinary city-dwellers in their drab, ironed uniforms around.

Ironically enough, in Makerere, I had suddenly to realize that among the several hundreds of African students from over eighty tribes and also among a good number of their Indian colleagues, the only people with something a little colourful in their outward appearance, were . . . the English professors in their shorts and bush-shirts or their wives in skirts and sleeveless little blouses—and perhaps also a few Indian girls with *cholis* distantly reminiscent of French *bikinis* matching gay pony tails.

As though in illustration, the wife of a professor told me :

“ Whenever I see in the distance a man wearing shorts, I know, it is a European. But when I see the full stiff Victorian age attire, buttoned coat, long pants, heavy boots . . . African or Indian! ”

Even though there are no dress regulations imposing so much overdressing, the students themselves choose this kind of garb deemed correct in North American or European schools. Knowing how irksome, how uncomfortable, and, above all, how costly such clothing is in purchase and up-keep, I discussed the matter with the students. What made them more papal than the Pope, or more dress-minded than the British (which amounts to pretty much the same thing)?

“ You mean the Europeans? Ah—*they* can afford to go lightly dressed and be comfortable. They are after all *Wa-Zungu* with all the prestige behind them! But we? We must show that we are now civilized. We are no small boys—to wear knickers! They call even an old African servant, who could be their grand-father *boy*. They think that we are all like little children, that we are unable to think logically. Just read your anthropological colleague, Levy-Bruhl. *La Mentalité Primitive* ! ”

Thirty-seven years after the foundation of the College in 1922, two hundred fifty students of both sexes are now annually passing with degrees. This is an elite which is bound to play a decisive part

in the future of Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya and Zanzibar, from where most of the students are recruited, though some come also from Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, Somalia and Sudan. The intellectual level of instruction and off-duty activities is both thorough and high. In the library reading room, I found the latest copies of numerous technical journals on a wide range of subjects. There is certainly nothing suggestive of colour-bar in the easy contacts between European teachers or their families and African or Indian students, who share their clean and spacious hostels with a few White students as co-inmates.

Yet one might sense that there is even at Makerere a subtle way of discrimination. Certainly not discrimination against skin-colour, or against non-Christian religions as such. But a feeling is there and it is probably this which misled Gunther into saying that "students may be Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Muslims, but pagans are not admitted." (1957 : 421). Upon inquiry I was informed that this statement is incorrect.

There is a small, well-kept mosque on the campus. It is provided with a delightfully carved wooden door from Zanzibar (Fig. 8) reminiscent of South Indian traditional Hindu homes. However, the small mosque opposite the Institute of Social Research (itself rather on the outer fringes of the College site, though on a most beautiful slope) can scarcely compare with the impressive Roman Catholic and Anglican churches very conspicuously placed on the right and left side of the main building. The under-privileged position of their mosque may be felt by many Muslim students, both boys and now also some girls, who come from Tanganyika and Zanzibar. Yet the building is there and it is being used for prayers. It would, on the other hand, be impossible to imagine that a truly African religious shrine, or a sacred tree for the worship of God in an African way, could be found on the campus in its prevailing atmosphere. But on the neighbouring hill, just over the valley, there is the Kampala Museum where I heard the most delicately tuned xylophone *ngomas* executed by a curator with traditional plus European study background in comparative musicology.

What is it then, one is led to wonder, that makes African religions, "pagan" religions, so vulnerable *vis-a-vis* the non-African foreign concepts? Hinduism stood its ground in the educational institutions of India, even before independence, and there was a Hindu Univer-

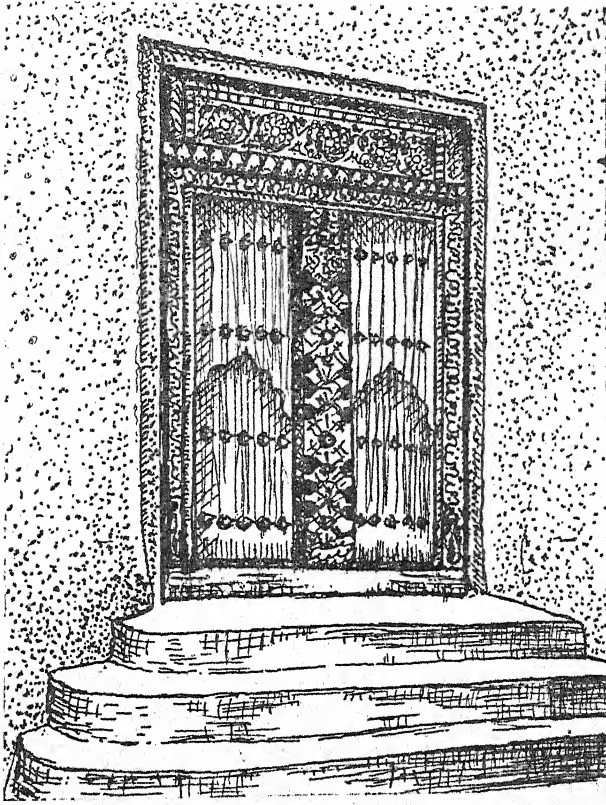


Fig 8

MOSQUE DOOR IN ZANZIBAR STYLE

(Note the similarity with traditional wood-carvings of South India)

sity already under the British even though Hindus too have been referred to as pagans, in missionary circles of the country.

There is certainly nothing intrinsically inferior in African traditional cultures, as compared to any other, unless one considers pre-literacy as a fundamental defect. Hindus have the experience of three thousand years' literary tradition behind them which provided more sharply pointed weapons of intellectual fencing and

an eloquence familiar to literate civilizations, but not necessarily "higher cultures". The high cultural values of Hinduism are not the technique in formulating or transmitting thoughts. Let us make no mistakes through equivocations! The truly creative genius of Hindu culture and Hindu religion is not based on these weapons, much less on the use of reading and writing. The Maharishi of Tiruvannamalai ran away from his primary school education in Madurai and Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Bengal was a poorly educated man by modern examination standards. Yet these two are more typically representative of Hindu India, than even Gandhi and Vinobha Bhave, not to speak of Tagore and Nehru. Is it necessary to point out, in this connection, that a carpenter not a Pharisee, or any other learned man, came to be the most widely known and certainly the most loved son of the Jewish people with all their achievements in intellectual pursuits? Or that an Arab, who began his career as an unlettered camel-driver is now, after more than thirteen hundred years, still the most devotedly respected son among all the great conquerors, rulers, scientists, and poets to whom his nation has given birth?

This snobbery of the literates and of the technically specialised, in their dealings with the pre-literates, whom they are so fond of calling "Barbarians," is a queer thing. Even at Makerere, though much less than elsewhere in Africa, a mockingly condescending attitude persists towards any culture or anything traditional which can be branded as primitive, barbarian or savage, on the sole ground that it does not express its values and its ideals through the medium of reading and writing, and fails to come along in the garb of cold-country dress and all-covering clothing fashions. This, no doubt, is in its very nature a most un-anthropological attitude. Anthropologists agree that there is something in the nature of primitive peoples which has real values to offer, and which is more than fiction, figment of the imagination or, the fantasy of opposition compulsions against the artifice of civilization. These people have a kind of simple happiness which, if it were to vanish from the surface of the earth, would make this planet poorer. Yet we do not go one single step out of our way to keep these values flourishing and to translate them into our language.

Uganda has been more thoroughly westernized, at least in the realm of clothing fashions, than Tanganyika and even parts of Kenya, so far. Well-meaning, but short-sighted missionaries introduced in the country the kind of horridly ugly gown which played havoc in the Pacific islands, where it is still known as "Mother Hubbard," and which goes here by the name of "Gomazi," or "Boarding," after a boarding school for girls at Gayaza, nine miles out of Kampala, on the Namulonga Road. First a jacket had been devised to cover the shoulders and the breasts of the girls, as these were suddenly considered to be immoral. Then, I was told, an Indian tailor helped the reform and constructed a contraption out of six yards of cloth, combining jacket and frock in one piece of quite unique ugliness and impracticability—even if there are not three to four more yards of additional cloth slung under it around hips and buttocks, so as to hide these particularly sinful pieces of female anatomy and to make the girl who wears the thing appear like a single, shapeless, waddling giant pear.

This is admittedly an excessive case of ill-applied acculturation which the younger girls in Uganda themselves are beginning to discard. But it is only one among many extravagant examples of the clothing mania which has definitely gone out of hand.

One day I sat in a cultivators' village nearby the Nile swamps of Uganda. We were a party of five non-African outsiders and one African teacher, with a local Gombolola Chief playing the host. The surrounding plantain gardens were steaming with green heat and we were huddled in the brief afternoon shade of the south-eastern verandah, trying to chase a few thousand flies back into the sunbeams that beat down from the north-west, hoping against hope that the persistent creatures would be killed by the heat outside, as we feared that we soon would be in the shade. The Ceylonese anthropology graduate in our party agreed with me, that the sun and heat in these parts could hardly be more oppressive, whilst the damp and flies seemed even worse than in India or Ceylon.

The Gombolola Chief offered lime juice in small porcelain cups, his stern face courteously attentive, even though little rivulets ran down his brow and cheeks to disappear along the sinews of his neck into a cream-coloured "under-shirt" over which he wore a *kanzu*. The *kanzu* is a long, floating desert coat, which Arab camel-riders wear as the only garment to protect themselves against

sandstorms and which is meant to let the air pass freely. But our Chief had a tight-fitting sports jacket buttoned over the upper part of his *kanzu*, whilst black, freshly-pressed, dress trousers, woollen stockings and shining black shoes emerged from the lower part, forming three layers of garments, one superimposed upon the other.

The Chief was accompanied by his niece. With the delicately shaped fingers of her right hand, she offered us sweet little bananas from a bunch balanced on her left hip. Her face was like that on one of the picture postcards which I had one day admired in the lobby of my hotel: that of a half-grown girl bathing, with glittering drops of water on her slim, well-built body. The girl before us belonged to the same tribe, but, instead of a grass skirt, wore a tight-fitting, rather smartly tailored suit, dark blue with white stripes, which, though stressing her perfect figure, also emphasised the roundness of her face, the broad lips and somewhat short neck over the cloth-covered shoulders. Yet her gait on bare feet was a superb elastic swing. She even looked cool by the side of the "well-dressed" uncle—but scarcely so when compared with her tribal sister in the national dress of the card!

The shadows grew longer, the temperature fell, and it looked as though we were going to have a pleasant evening, when a red-and-black car drew up in front of us all. Silence fell over our *safari* group.

A short man in the same attire as the Chief descended on small, quick-moving feet. His piercing eyes shot first at the Chief and in the next second at our group.

"Ah—look, the *Wa-Zungu!*" His extended hand pointed now to a blond Cambridge graduate who had just flown out, for the first time, to Africa, and could have been the son of the new-comer, in years, though scarcely in appearance. "This is the man responsible for my birth..." After a dramatic pause during which we prepared ourselves for unexpected developments, the little man continued: "Excellent—all good Christians, I suppose. You will please agree to witness my fulfilment of a very heavy duty indeed, by giving bad news to an older brother... this one!" He turned and, pointing to the Chief, whispered in slow articulation: "Your father has... died!"—It was a short but despite the consumption of much liquor, a perfectly acted performance.

The Chief bowed in dignified composure and sat down, for the first time that afternoon, among us, his guests. I felt truly sorry for him. The African teacher in our party whispered consolingly into my ear that the Chief's father, a much respected village notable, was well over seventy, and his death had been long expected; that the newcomer was a doctor, "native type"; that his mother had been serving in the house of one of the first European explorers, some 60 years before; and that he, "the doctor" himself was rather successful and hence well off, in spite of his attachment to bottle and gourd. We decided to attend the funeral next morning.

"There you will see our old dress fashions, made of banana leaves," said my African neighbour, "and perhaps also some of bark cloth!"

The house of mourning was on one of the elevations of the neighbourhood, too dry for bananas. There was no other vegetation either, and the sun's ray at eight in the morning felt like those of a July afternoon in Athens. The dry ground reflected the light into a greenhouse atmosphere. Most of the people living within a radius of five to ten miles arrived in a continuous stream, sat down on the white hot ground and waited patiently for the ceremony to begin. Sub-chiefs, more prominent commoners and special guests, such as our multi-racial *safari* group, were put up under the shade of a screen of leafy branches and seated on the kind of wooden folding chairs which are now commonly used for honoured guests in African peasant homes. The Gombolola Chief, our host of the preceding yesterday, served us again with lime juice and plantains.

Rural death ceremonies offer an occasion to express communal solidarity, rather than individual emotions. This was the case here too, except when a close relative arrived, a daughter, for instance, with all her children, grandchildren and their nearest of kin. Their lamentation for the dead reverberated in a strangely rhythmical manner. It was not without a certain classical beauty—submission to life's inevitable tragedy—death.

The incessant trickle of small groups and individuals continued meanwhile: typical mid-twentieth century peasants in that typical part of East Africa. They were middle-sized, strongly-built, though never corpulent farmers, such as would flock to a village ceremony, or fair, anywhere between Ireland and Poland, or Norway and

Turkey, except of course that their skin was darker and the short cropped, frizzy hair of both sexes had an even more visibly different texture. But one gets so quickly used to general biological facts! What really did give me a start was something less essentially innate, yet more obtrusive to the eye—the clothing.

It is not easy to describe this. How to convey the visual effect of such a North-European old-clothes parade in a tropical country? It passed by, slowly and continuously, hour after hot hour, and left a visible trickle of steaming sweat on the narrow path through the thorns in the dry sand. At best, I can single out a random example or two, though by no means the most striking, to give some idea of what I saw. There was a lad in a lady's green winter coat, rimmed with imitation fur at the neck and sleeves, which the old-clothes trader had not bothered to remove. Model "New Look 1946," rather long, it dangled down to the feet on which white-and-brown shoes appeared over red skiing socks, whilst the naturally pigmented face, at the other extremity of this remarkable figure, looked rather obscure under the deep shade of a sombrero hat. Another member of the same age group combined a soldier's heavy boots with grey-and-lilac nylon socks, and a pair of dark blue woollen pants, the mere sight of which made one's legs itch. A light-yellow cardigan of camel's wool was worn directly over the oozing skin. However, being open in front, too large for the boy and full of holes, it shamelessly revealed his bare chest. So he had thrown over it a green-and-yellow-checked sports shirt which, mercifully for its wearer, was minus back, shoulder and elbow parts, thus resembling a colourful spider's web, holding two bush-shirt breast pockets over the lad's insignificant nipples.

Such "spider-web" shirts enjoy wide popularity all over Africa. Worn alone, they constitute an ingenious, if sometimes cumbersome, compromise between Victorian ideas of the body's intrinsic shamefulness and its natural thirst for a little cooling breeze. There are several types: for instance, those with or without cuff-links dangling from thin threads, with or without a string of buttons on the thread which keeps the breast-pockets in place, while another variety has double-shoulder-pieces, which the continuous sweat stream fails to dissolve. Common to all spider's web shirts is a not unnatural trend to rapid and complete disintegration, whenever their owners contrive to move a bit faster than

the average rhythm of work in Africa demands. However, there is generally at least one hand or a pair of lips, free to stem the threatened disappearance of this treasured possession. To come back to the particular dark-green-and-yellow specimen under discussion: its colour scheme was tastefully matched by a Tyrolean hunting hat which kept it in harmony with the general sartorial trends of the assembly. The *Wa-Zee*, it is true, put on a little more clothing than these youngsters and of heavier material, as befitted their social position, conforming to the three-layer principle of cultural history in clothing which we had noticed on the Gombolola Chief the previous evening. To some, however, that did not seem quite enough and they added a silk cloth, thrown over the three layers—an Indian upper-cloth, originally meant to be worn over bare shoulders, but now superadded to European shirts or jackets . . .

This kind of intercontinental clothing combination for African men seems more effective in absorbing the old-clothes market of distant lands than the orthodox ladies' dress of the region—though it hardly exceeds it in ugliness. All but quite young modern women, such as our Gombolola Chief's niece, wear in Uganda the Gomazi. The shoulders and upper arms of the gomazi's proud owner here are also carefully covered with Victorian-style folds of cloth and the kind of embroidery which African girls are now taught to produce in "domestic-science" classes. Two large buttons, matching the gown's colour (usually a dull red) are placed conspicuously between the left breast and shoulder. These unwieldy and un-African ornaments might well have given rise to yet another feature of Western acculturation: two red circular patches, each the size of a silver shilling, painted on otherwise natural ebony cheeks. They fit in with the general impression of a wild carnival, like the colour-printed scarves over the naturally frizzy hair which offers so admirable a protection against the tropical sun-rays. But the scarves, no doubt, serve to indicate modesty . . .

It would, however, be misleading to conclude from this description that women wearing a "gomazi" had forfeited the distinction of accumulating, like their menfolk, several layers of clothing history on their bodies. Especially at ceremonial occasions, in the afternoon, when one feels one simply cannot stand the thinnest shirt any longer, a heavy colour-printed cloth is tied over the breast

piece of the "gomazi" and tucked in, under the arm-pits, as was originally done with bark cloth alone. As for bark cloth, this pliable, clean, beautifully cool-looking, sepia-coloured material is now decried as *chenzi*. Only a single half-grown girl from a distant village wore it directly on the body as it was meant to be used. She looked like a queen, or a fairy princess, among a host of wildly grimacing nightmares

Meanwhile the climax of the ceremonies seemed to have come. One after the other the deceased's seven widows passed by the dead body in a spirited, dance-like movement, which they accompanied with high-pitched, long-drawn-out reverberations of formal grief. There was dignified, if dejected, beauty in this, as there would have been in the traditional banana-leaf garments, had they not been worn over three other incongruous layers of clothing.

It was at this juncture that the Protestant priest arrived in his car. An African clergyman in black suit, his massive neck pressed into a starched collar which had turned soft and somewhat yellowish by the time its wearer had walked the short distance to the open grave. There a hitch was discovered: it was impossible to lower the truly gigantic coffin into the space dug. What to do now? The grave-diggers did not lose heart. After an hour, or two, they would have widened the pit enough to accommodate even a Viking chief's burial canoe. So we had time to wait and to think . . .

I am not the first to notice the abuse of European clothing in African life of today. Practically every modern novel on the British, or any other European colonizers in the continent, offers no doubt wittier accounts of the same sort of thing: the caricature Africans make of themselves by imitating Europe, especially in the matter of clothing. Is it a bad joke, or something more—and worse—than that? And who is responsible for this travesty of acculturation, which brings death to *all* possible culture?

I remembered a few Europeans with whom I had discussed this matter. The optimists among them hoped that it was only a passing phase, though they could hardly point to any indication of its passing. Others shrugged their shoulders, and some, I am afraid, seemed to be well pleased.

Serious disturbances can be caused in individual psyches by

exposing them to jarring colours or sounds for a sufficiently long time. It is even possible to kill a man through deprivation of skin breathing. This we know. But we do not know, or realize, what can happen to a nation, or to large groups of nations rather, to which a very similar treatment is being administered for almost three generations now. Or do we?

Can we expect a balanced state of mind in men, women and children who have come to believe that a perpetual masquerade is the inevitable price to be paid for the acceptance into the family of civilized nations?

Scarcely. But then, who is responsible for the situation, such as it is?

"The natives, of course! Who forces them to go in for all this nonsense? Not we!" is the ready response of the White settlers, or of any other European who is trying to make a good living in Africa. "We liked them as they were, in the good old days, when they knew their place—and were kept in it. They were honest, hard-working and happy people, as long as they stuck to their tribal customs and costumes. But now? Playing the European, pinching each other's wives and talking of independence! It is all due to outside interference: the missionaries, government regulations, and now on the top of it all, Labour Party agitators!"

"But what can we do?" the Government officials say. "This is the trend of evolution—progress! You can't put back the clock. They see that we are wearing European clothes, though these are, admittedly, sometimes a nuisance. They can easily purchase them from the old-clothes market or from the Indian *dukas*. How could we prevent them? And if we tried, we would have hell to pay!"

Such protestations of helplessness do not ring quite true. When the introduction of ploughing instead of hoe-cultivation causes dangerous soil erosion, something is done about it. If the adoption of fire-arms or commercialised forestry threatens the extinction of wild life, game reserves and national parks are being created. If people take inordinately to the use of cocaine, heroin or other dangerous drugs, we do not say correspondingly: "Well, that is the progress of synthetic chemistry. If they want to destroy themselves, it's their funeral. We can't help it!"

However, in the comparable question of overdressing, as it stands now in tropical countries, everybody seems quite helpless

—though some express open satisfaction. In the house of a Scandinavian engineer, I saw a beautifully illustrated book on Africa which one of his relatives has published. The frontispiece, an African girl in African dress, was truly aesthetic in its simplicity. Someone in the party looked at it casually:

"All that is gone now!" he remarked.

"And a jolly good thing that it is," snapped a middle-aged European of influence in the region—one who was neither a missionary nor a White settler . . .

"No. It is a pity," retorted an administrator, "for economic, health and aesthetic reasons, for the country as a whole—and also for ourselves. But if *we* go in for shorts and light shirts, *they* take to cowboy costumes, lounge suits and dinner jacket below and above *kanzus*. They think that this is progress . . . a point of honour. Do you propose that we go naked and have our Governors dressed up as Masai chiefs to teach them better? . . ."

To this question, put in this way, there is of course only one answer. And yet, there might have been (and perhaps still are) possibilities for some compromise and a reasonable solution.

"When in Rome do as the Romans do," is an English proverb, and it has been practised at times. Moghul dress was worn by the British in India until the Mutiny, now officially termed the "First War of Independence." Only since then has European clothing become the obligatory White Man's Burden in tropical countries. But during and after World War II soldiers, officers, foremen, engineers, and travellers began to discard shirts during hot work. The *sarong* too was not always taboo to the British in Malaya, if we can trust Somerset Maugham's descriptions. It is only among the average missionaries, administrators and die-hard settlers that the White Men's Burden is still carried proudly. So long as this is so, the mere presence of Europeans in tropical countries must needs be acting as a ferment of destruction against all attempts at cultural rehabilitation among Africans. This may sound pessimistic. Yet we live in a time of unexpected changes and on a small planet in which nobody's funeral is entirely his own concern any more.

As I was pondering these problems, the sun went down. It became cooler and would be dark soon. But the diggers had not been lazy. The grave was now spacious enough to take the huge coffin without hitch. The final sermon too, came to a close before complete darkness fell. The funeral seemed finished. We turned back to our camp where we hoped to find a huge meal awaiting us.

However, my Ceylonese friend called me back with a smile, pointing to the grave which was in the process of being closed. Over it stood the native doctor who had so impressively brought word of the death only twenty-six hours earlier. He seemed engaged in some rapidly repeated action. What was it?

At first I could not understand what his rhythmically moving arms were really working at. But my friend told me with a suppressed giggle—and now I saw it myself: those arms were working . . . an old flit-pump, probably to purify the still not yet fully closed grave . . .

Insecticide as a burial gift? Why not? A bit inconsistent from our point of view—yes—but it was not the most inconsistent, much less the most harmful thing, I had seen people doing and mistakenly imitating, that day!

This was a comparatively harmless point of honour!

It may seem a cheap kind of humour to poke fun at people who are so obviously eager to learn civilization, progress and "elegance" from their more powerful taskmasters, literate societies. The story was told, not so much to make fun at the expense of the fellow with his flit-pump, as to show the effects of some far more serious misunderstandings.

Who or what brought the all-covering, cold country clothing to tropical countries? Who declared them to be the mark of respectability, thereby changing much more than only the body temperature of "most of the world" as Linton put it (1948 : 7).

"Invaders from cold countries" is the obvious, simple, but in all its implications rarely realised answer. From the north on the northern hemisphere, and from the south on the southern, cold country invaders set a new style in warm, tropical areas. The result is a unique disparity, a jarring conflict between function and aspiration. The new attitude was brought about first by European reli-

gious zealots, obsessed by their concepts of the sinfulness of the flesh, and later by the western imperialist ideas concerning the White Man's Burden.

At the beginning it was by no means easy to indoctrinate non-European people with these concepts, but it is only long afterwards that organised resistance against them was made sporadically by, for instance, Mahatma Gandhi, Vinobha Bhave and several African nationalists, from Jomo Kenyatta to Dr. Nkrumah. They tried to revive various forms of traditional and semi-traditional dress-style but so far these attempts remain confined to a thin layer of intellectuals—idealists or sometimes politicians—without yet a real appeal to the masses. The power of prestige which missionaries and colonial administrators succeeded in attaching to the European style is such that it still reigns supreme all over the globe, including the tropical belt.

The amount of money and labour spent on this prestige signal is immense. This foreign-introduced worship of conspicuous consumption has the triple disadvantage of being unnecessary, untraditional and also hygienically harmful. Besides, it leads to ugliness. It creates a picture of the non-European races which shows them as second-rate editions, even as caricatures, of the white races. Africans are frequently differentiated from Caucasians by more harmonious body proportions, soft roundish facial features and the superior aesthetic effect of a well pigmented skin. This harmony, however is easily destroyed when the African body is trapped into a narrow collar and a tight, sewn garment which had never been designed to suit its characteristics.

In my village studies on the Makonde Plateau, I discovered that about 75 per cent of the cash income in an ordinary farmer's family goes into clothing whilst there is not enough money for cheap and popular proteins offered in the form of dry fish or for the badly required vitamins, offered in that of palm oil. There is not even enough money for the once popular hide or fur blankets, so useful during the nights which in April to June are often bitingly cold. It is not difficult to imagine that the Wa-Makonde must have been happier two or three generations ago when they were keeping their bodies free from covering during the hot hours of the day but, at the same time, used warm blankets at night during the cold season.

This change can by no stretch of imagination be considered as progress in the sense which this much misused word was originally meant to convey.

Yet the implications of the particular culture change which European dress fashions in the Tropics have brought about go still further (Ehrenfels, 1952:215ff. 1955, 1958, 1959a). Generally a deep rift is torn by the introduction of the new style, separating the "haves" from the "have nots". The former are naturally the first to imitate Europeans in their clothing habits which render outdoor life in tropical climate, even mere walking in a sunlit street, impracticable. The second, and by far larger group, the "have nots", feel obliged to imitate in turn the same style of dress which for them has to go without air-conditioning, without permanent conferences in America or other countries in temperate zones, and without soap, starch and charcoal for ironing, very often without enough clear water for washing these garments in places where even drinking water is scarce. In other words, they often cannot keep the body clean, much less change clothes whenever these get sweat-soaked, filthy and dirty.

It is possible to live beautifully, cleanly and happily in tropical countries—especially for those who are blessed with a healthy, dark pigmentation which makes movements in the open enjoyable and easy. But it is technically and biologically impossible to do so with a burden of sweat-soaked filth and ugliness into which all-covering clothes are bound to turn after less than half a day's work in those regions. The result of this situation is disharmony and discontent among the "have nots". It cannot satisfy their aspirations and is sure to end in the destruction of the traditional values of the tropical people concerned, as well as the newly introduced values of foreign civilizations.

This is a man-made dilemma much as the armament-race, overpopulation in sordid industrial slums or deforestation with all its consequences—soil erosion, climatic deterioration and finally desiccation and regional death. These major ills, affecting the majority of the nations and populations of the world, are so obvious that many of our contemporaries cannot escape noticing them and have taken, sometimes quite bravely, a strong stand against them. The curse which the imposition of cold country clothing brings over uncounted millions of people in the tropical

belt, on the other hand, is practically unknown to the rest of the world. Moreover, astonishingly and paradoxically, it is not realised for what it is even by the people stricken with it. Among the worst sufferers in this so far scarcely noticed sore on the face of our modern civilization are the people of Africa—the most tropical of the continents.

11. *Fear of the Body* *Fear of the Self*

SUCH frivolous topics as clothing and clothing fashions are usually dismissed with a half-condescending, half-mocking smile. Yet the comparatively recent over-dressing of people in the broad, tropical belt is a unique event, an unprecedented case of world assimilation. At first the aristocracies, then the middle classes, and now even the proletariat and peasantry imitate the European style all-covering, sewn clothing. Culture changes, acculturations, the spreading of techniques and materials are all familiar phenomena. Yet such a wholesale assimilation of hundreds of millions of people by an originally very small minority coming from abroad has no parallel in the known history of civilizations.

Some of the biggest financial enterprises, the yarn, cloth and tailoring industries, and also cotton-growing agriculture, are here involved. However, any reference to this problem is put aside with a smile which contains about as much condescension, as it expresses irritation over trifling matters. This annoyed smile says as much as: "Who would talk about dress?" or: "Are we not serious people?"

There is, in this reaction, a shocked and vituperative undertone, almost of the kind which the first people to discuss sex seriously in polite society must have experienced at the beginning of the century. This similiarity of attitude may be traced to two different causes.

Firstly: There is the general human desire to dissociate oneself from the fact that we all of us live and experience the world through an animal body. Any reference to this nonetheless undeniable fact meets with either repulsed giggling or more serious demonstrations of antagonism though this antagonism is generally subconscious, if not entirely unconscious, in those who exhibit it.

Secondly: this repulsion is by implication transferred to any discussion or realisation of that which reveals the existence of the human body as such. The removal of unnecessary clothing or the recognition that a differently coloured body or a body with differently structured hair—but still a very typically human body—

may remind unduly and unpleasantly of the basic facts of life. Hence the scornful smile which we have to brave and bear if we want to discuss the problem of clothing and its roots.

Neither the shame of the body as such, nor its transfer to any of the non-European clothing styles, which reveal parts of the body, have been indigenous in tropical civilizations, literate or pre-literate.

The mission organizations are a very powerful force in East Africa. They are not infrequently in conflict with the Government and still more often with open-minded, kind-hearted individual administrators and with some of their own best members. Consequently not all references which I made about missions and missionaries in Africa, about their work, their wealth and their policies, could be mere praise and approval. A superficial reader may be tempted to link this fact up with another and to say that all I have written in this context was written because I myself do not happen to be a member in any of the proselytising Christian churches. Such a judgement would hardly render justice to the ideas which I tried to express in these pages.

What I have been against is the widely spread though theologically unfounded concept that Christian missionaries think themselves called upon to bring a higher kind of civilization to savage pagans as the preachers of the only and exclusively true religion. One may, or may not, subscribe to the view that any one particular or several kindred Christian Church organisations together are the only and exclusive path to God, but one cannot, as a social anthropologist, condone the expressed opinion that African civilizations have no higher values of their own and that the only way to make Africans share in salvation is to implant European cultural forms and European value systems with all details of European customs and costumes upon the bodies ("black bodies") and into the souls ("black souls") of Africans. This again has nothing to do with the broad principles of Christianity, nor those of any other religion.

By stating this, no attempt is being made to detract from the good and great work which has been done by many missionaries in building hospitals and opening schools, or teaching carpentry

and other crafts, nor is there any intention to pick holes in the zeal and enthusiasm which inspired brave men like Livingstone to take a firm stand against slavery. Nevertheless, after four years stay in West and Central Africa, of which one was spent in anthropological work and three on behalf of the U.S. Government, W. R. Bascom arrives at the conclusion that "most literate Africans believe that the good admittedly done by some missionaries is not sufficient to justify the presence of foreign missions in Africa." (1949: 369). It should however be remembered that there is a problem of education which Europeans themselves in their own countries have not yet solved: the spread of modern education creates in *Europe as elsewhere* a number of maladjusted and discontented individuals.

What is of importance in the missionary approach, as in fact in all European technical aid and the attempt to spread progress, is the spirit in which these tasks are being pursued.

One of my first visits to a mission school introduced me to a neatly kept classroom. The walls were covered with colour prints showing H.M. the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, various martyred saints, an atomic power plant project and a lively, illustrated short history of *The Discovery of East Africa*. From the European point of view this was no doubt a discovery but it struck me as a little too ethnocentric, to put it to African children that their ancestors had been as it were non-existent to the rest of mankind, if not to themselves, till the time they were "discovered" by a group of Portuguese adventurers. The illustrations, accompanying this history of "discovery", showed all the paraphernalia of civilization in the form of heavy, medieval garbs heaped on Vasco da Gama, his sailors and warriors, as well as of course the priest who had been with him. On the other hand, the discovered ancestors of the present aspirants to a possible "Junior Cambridge", stood in a kind of nakedness, which the artist endowed less with the splendour of Greek statues or the innocence of *Paradise Lost*, (though traditional Africans can remind an unprejudiced observer of both), but with the expression of frightened savages, facing a stern representative of civilization.

All the noble figures, depicted in this classroom, as in a thousand

others, are European. Caucasoids are the saints, church-fathers, heroes, warriors and statesmen offered to the imagination of the children. Can the absence of African, Negroid, bodily types fail to dishearten, if not to distort, the mind of African youth? Can the growing African generations feel confident about themselves if their bodies are only depicted to indicate savagery or even shame?

Every detail of European behaviour, actual or pictorial, concourses to impress upon the African the idea that nudity, or semi-nudity which was traditional among his ancestors, as it was in Greece, Egypt, India and actually in most parts of the world, is savage, immoral and *chenzi*, whilst European clothing is the mark of civilization, elegance and especially morality. Priests and nuns put on more and heavier clothing than the ordinary European layman and woman who, in tropical countries, succeed also in giving the impression that the bigger a social function and the higher the rank of an honoured guest, the more and heavier clothes must be worn. Many an official who would like to water bare-chested, the flowers in his garden feels that he has to put on a shirt, while his African gardener comes with the same unnecessary burden on his body because he thinks he needs to prove his refinement to his master. So both go along sweating and smelly, but civilized.

What is it, in the last analysis, that brings about this auctioning of an ever increasing complication and burden, almost in the way of the Kwakiutl wealth destruction in *potlach* feast competitions?

"A natural sense of dignity and decorum", would be the answer most contemporaries give to this question. But this "natural sense" did not operate when Ananta met the Buddha, or Alexander Pythagoras, or Arjuna Krishna or Pilatus the Christ. It did not force neckties and woollen coats on Amenophis IV or Asoka, nor blouses and brassiers on Queen Parvati of Conjeevaram or Pallas Athene, nor more garments than a short *lungi* just below the knee and a simple sheet worn over the left shoulder on Prophet Muhammed, the simple apparel still worn to this day at *hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca in commemoration of the old style of unsewn dress in Arabia. So the theory of a natural sense of dignity and decorum, militating against traditional semi-nudity in tropical areas, cannot be maintained. Then, what is it which, in the last analysis, brought about this unique world-acculturation of the European clothing

style in the vast tropical belt? Who created this White Man's Burden now shouldered by all the millions of coloured peoples in eager imitation of the West? Travellers from America to southern European ports experience a grotesque mockery of state-ordained morality which offers an answer.

When their boat calls on the Azores, or any other Portuguese or Spanish harbour, and when the passengers visit the beach in the hope to have a swim and may be a cool drink, they can get the latter all right, but will not be permitted to enjoy the former unless their bathing costumes conform to very interesting rules. Men must have an upper tricot to cover their chest and the law is that the *two* strips should be on the *two* shoulders. Men in the Azores avoid the difficulty and still manage to comply with the law: they wear normal male bathing shorts and adorn themselves with a white under-shirt in a most characteristic fashion. They pass the head through the two arm holes and the wretched tricot, knotted around the neck, dangles down the chest as if it were a large tie! All men who swim in the Azores swim with white ties . . . Women on the other hand, are not allowed two-piece bathing costumes, not considered decent by the law, probably because they show the skin around the waist. One has to wonder if an Indian lady in *choli* and *sari* is or is not decently dressed, as this attire precisely exhibits that part of her anatomy! By such beach yardsticks, even the proverbially modest Indian woman in her puritanical post-Moghul dress would be considered as not sufficiently clad . . .

The church has thoroughly shaped the style of life in countries such as Spain and Portugal. There are special dress regulations for church-going women. They must wear hats and sleeves and their frocks must have a required length. It can hardly be a coincidence that this kind of hypocritical fear of the body has been deeply implanted into the people of these most catholic countries. The fear of the body made into a cult, unhealthy in Europe, becomes disastrous in more tropical regions. No amount of falsifying history, of depicting tropical cultures as no cultures at all, or, on the other hand, of pretending that an Arab *kanzu* in East Africa or a post-Moghul Victorian *sherwani* with its high collar and dozens of buttons in India, are "national dress", can eradicate the fact that all tropical cultures were free from the taboo on partial nudity before foreign invaders subdued them. As long as this fear of the

body continues, a still greater and more pernicious fear will persist, the fear of one's own traditional culture, the fear of the self. These fears are contagious and finally drive the frightened into dangerous mistakes—the attempt to ban certain vital forces by pretending that they do not exist. This mistake only invites chaos where once harmony reigned; senseless destruction where once culture grew. Free men and women are turned into slaves of obsessions. A European woman recently told me the story of her experience in a big South Indian hospital where she had been taken to be X-rayed as a pneumonia patient. When she started removing her blouse, which had buttons, as she would naturally have done in her country without hesitation, she was enjoined by the medical authority to wait—which she did, for fifteen minutes, in her feverish condition—until a three yard piece of cloth was brought to cover her breasts “decently” in front of the X-ray apparatus... This happened in 1959, after my return from Africa, and in Kerala where traditionally most women used to go about bare-breasted until World War I and where they were not admitted for some time later into temples with the foreign blouse or *choli* coverage. When I myself arrived in Kerala after World War II to pursue my studies in matriliney, a protestant missionary told me proudly that through Christian influence the sinful nakedness of women had now gone out of fashion.

The result of this purification can also be studied on the spot. Whilst formerly women used to go unmolested with bare breasts to temple or tank, now nasty looks and insulting remarks are sometimes being passed by men to women, European or otherwise, on the public roads of the state capital. Women, black, brown or white, are quite understandably sensitive to indecent gestures and obscene words of men. And this creates a strange situation where European women, for instance, who by example-setting counteracted *pardah*, *gosha* or foot-crippling, refrain in South India and East Africa, countries of traditional light dress *par excellence*, from wearing the type of easy, functional clothes to which they are accustomed in their own lands. A French woman, for example, who enjoyed sun-bathing in *bikini* on the warm sands of the Riviera, hesitated to put on the same attire on South Indian beaches, and finally chose a heavier one-piece bathing costume,

Similarly, American and other Western women (even anthropology scholars among them!) get an especially "decent" wardrobe for use in South India. A new kind of White Woman's Burden. Undoubtedly all these anomalies are ultimately rooted in the false shame of the body which never fails to engender an unhealthy moral atmosphere.

Though the introduction of European clothing offers probably the most acute and most damaging aspect of ill-applied westernization (Elwin, 1959 : 128, 132, 186), it is by no means the only one.

The early missionaries who came from Rome to Gallia, Germania, Eire and other European countries showed broadmindedness when they adopted all the pre-Christian rituals and folklore which survive to this day in Christian religious customs from coloured eggs, identified with the *osterhaasen*, the "Easter Hare", to lights burnt at Christmas or St. John's, or from prayers to a divine mother figure to countless other local saints, spirits or gods. They found it compatible with their reading of Christ's message to keep those pagan customs alive in the framework of a creed which had come from Asia to Rome and which had further diffused from there to central and northern Europe. But now in this century of enlightenment and progress, the spreading of civilization is tantamount to the annihilation of less aggressive culture forms by trampling them down under the feet of cheap rationalism, sometimes wedded to the empty name, the lifeless shell, of religion. Once indigenous cultural values are destroyed, the source of inspiration dries out and art automatically degenerates. Civilizations are like rivers which either fecundate their valleys by depositing beneficent sediments and giving the water of life, or spread out in raging, devastating floods, destroying everything in their path. One example of destructive Europeanization is evidenced in the field of East African sculpture. East Africa is not so prolific and rich in this respect, as the west coast—Dahomey, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, etc. Yet there was a very remarkable wood-carving industry among the Wa-Mawiha, the close tribal cousins and neighbours of the Wa-Makonde, in Mosambique, Portuguese East Africa. (Map II, p. 43).

Their small but intense figurines, their masks for the initiation



Fig. 9

MAWIHA ART

a wood-carved figurine in traditional style

ritual, and their traditional tools are of a strong and very original beauty. They have a style of their own. Faces are not of the classical harmony which is so frequent in West African bronzes, but they show a concentration which only a more than merely disciplinary method at youth initiation could have brought about. The head is bigger than natural proportions to the body would suggest and it has a hump-like excrescence over the forehead, where hair is

traditionally less closely cropped. The masks have generally an element of fearfulness or the grotesque about them. I saw one which looked like an ingeniously humoristic caricature of an Englishman with long whiskers, made of reddish fibre. I pride myself to have been lucky enough to find one original old Mawiha figurine at Mkonjowano, which the owner gave me for three shillings.

The mission fathers in Portuguese East Africa organized Mawiha art as a paying village industry. It was adapted to turn out crucifixes, St. Maries, book-shelves, lions, cranes and walking sticks which are not always bad. In fact, I am rather fond of one such walking stick, which I sometimes use for a late evening stroll. My hand likes to fondle the smooth rings and the small Mawiha head carved in blackwood. But the originality, the style, the vitality of Mawiha art is no longer there. Just a flicker of it.

African art, however, found its finest and most genuine expression in rhythm and dance, because both were inspired by the strong forces which must at one time have given a deeper life to initiation ritual. Unhappily, traditional dances, games, and pastimes are only too often rigorously prohibited to Christian converts by missionaries, although the same missionaries, had they remained in their own countries as parish priests, would probably not have dreamt of prohibiting folk-dance or folk-music at home.

African joy in rhythm and music has not been completely suppressed by the missions and in the mission schools. But the rhythms, the *ngomas*, African school children are taught there are only vaguely reminiscent of traditional art which is full of beauty and restrained power. Children are made to hammer European military marches and equally aggressive sounding, medieval chorals on old Mobil Oil tins and to howl sometimes quite provocative slogans against their own people who happen to adhere to another church,



Fig. 10

THE HANDLE
OF A WALKING
STICK

executed by a
Mawiha craftsman
under mission
influence

to the Muslim faith, or to the pagan beliefs of those *chenzi* Africans who had been "discovered" by Portuguese travellers four hundred years ago . . .

It is not the Gospel itself, but the hypocritical spirit in which it is being preached that causes real and lasting harm to Africa and many other countries in the world. Happily there are exceptions.

I once had a protestant missionary from New Guinea giving a lecture to the students in my department of Anthropology at the University of Madras. He mentioned that his mission encourages traditional dress for Christian converts; grass skirts and a free upper part of the body like those which the Giryama still wore when I left the Kenya coast in 1958. Men and women alike wear it, he said, even on Sunday at church service.

On the day of my departure from Mombasa, I noticed African school boys running in a row through the public gardens in front of the *Boma* and the Post Office. It was part of their physical exercise between classes. They had khaki shorts and healthy looking bare chests, without the usual load of sweat-soaked, dubiously clean upper and under shirts. There was something basically African about them. It was the first time that I felt African school children to be what one would wish them to be: energetic, happy, *themselves*! I was agreeably surprised. I made inquiries. Apparently the responsible principal was a Roman Catholic priest from a western country, much criticized for his "modernistic ideas". Unfortunately, I could not establish personal contacts with this brother-educationalist whose insight I have thus to record anonymously. I had to hurry to my boat which was to sail one hour later . . .

12. *African Synthesis*

THE s.s. "Karanja" had brought me to Africa. She was to take me away from it.

Boats, more than most other products of modern technology, have their own individual personalities. When I passed through the same corridors from the cabin next to the one I had occupied, in autumn 1957, to the same dining hall, or to the same upper deck for my sun-baths and early morning gymnastics, I had the impression of slipping back into a familiar snail's house.

Our route was scheduled along the coasts of Kenya and Somalia, then along the Horn of Africa towards Cape Guardafui, leaving the Island of Socotra on our right, and later following the southern coast of Arabia to Karachi and Bombay. It was the route I had dreamed of, during the first nights in my tent on the Makonde Plateau when the pebbles and the sand beneath me seemed to whisper of their past below the surface of the sea and to speak of the unknown and uncounted voyages which ancient seafarers must have made between these coasts of Western India, Pakistan, the Persian Gulf, Southern Arabia and East Africa.

The coast of the Horn was still in sight. I spent hours gazing at its distant line on the horizon as though reluctant to be separated from its unobtrusive attraction. I looked to the west towards the African continent until a new feature appeared in the east. It was the small, mysterious island Socotra. Still Africa, though almost Asia at the same time, like a natural outpost—the geographical full stop to my African venture. It was veiled by a thin milky haze, spread over the tops of its sharp, barren rocks. They emerged almost like skeleton limbs from the rolling, opalescent waves of the sea.

Decisive moments in human life do not always come with much noise and are often not even registered for what they are at the time they are experienced. For a long while I stared at the white, seemingly lifeless apparition—not quite knowing why.

The little-known island does not belong to the East African

islands proper, which have been populated since the seventh century by Arab seafarers. It does not fully belong to Arabia either. It is a spot in between. It may have been taken for the mysterious Ophir before, by Egyptians, Phoenicians and Greeks and is now populated by "Arabs" who are not conventional Arabs, though nobody seems to know what else they may be. On shore, there is a British resident, but islanders sailing on Arab *dows* to Mombasa, carry often not more than a scribbled line of recommendation as their papers. Their native tongue is not Arabic proper and many other unsolved questions, many riddles in and around Socotra added to the sense of mystery that held me unexpectedly.

As it had appeared, the island disappeared, like a vision, into the unreality of the white, semi-transparent ocean.

I went down to the reading-room and began mechanically to skip through a few old issues of *The Illustrated London News*. Soon I found myself reading an archæological report about recent discoveries of Indus and Sumerian artefacts on the Bahrein island (Geoffrey Bibby, 1958 : 54, 55). Such discoveries might prove important in reconstructing the trade links of the past which must have existed between the Indian subcontinent, Southern Arabia and East Africa. I had thought of those ties when I linked up the past history of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro with a possibly matrilineal society that had left its traces on all three shores of the Arabian Sea. (Ehrenfels, 1941:196).

Five thousand years have passed. By far the oldest, largest and most important concentration of Asians—the Indians and Pakistanis—on the western side of the sea is now in East Africa, leaving aside the South African Union (400,000 Asians) with its entirely different background and future prospects. South Africa is the only country of the continent in which the pending growth to independence and the final severing of political ties with Europe holds out a terrible threat for the majority of its peoples: the attempt at a state of permanent subordination of all non-Europeans to the White citizens (Patterson, 1953 : 31, 44, 49). The course of events in the rest of Africa has in recent years been marked by the attainment of independence in a growing number of states.

The following table gives the distribution of population by

racess in the four countries of East Africa following actual figures computed in 1957 for Tanganyika, in 1958 for Zanzibar, and estimated for mid 1958 for Kenya and Uganda: (The Statsman's Year Book, 1959):

Country	Africans	Asians	Arabs	Europeans	Total population
Kenya	... 6,080,000	165,000	35,500	64,700	6,351,000
Zanzibar	... 228,815	18,334	46,989	507	299,111
Uganda	... 5,619,300	56,600	2,000	9,000	5,688,900
Tanganyika	... 8,662,684	76,536	19,088	20,534	8,785,613

All population groups, are increasing rapidly, especially the Asian and European communities, whose natural growth has been further enhanced by continuing immigration. For instance, even though there are no large-scale European farm-settlements in Uganda, the European community in that country is said to have tripled during the last eleven years and the Asian doubled. What will happen to non-Africans in general and to the numerous Asians, in particular, after independence? Nationalists everywhere are inclined to think in terms of "Foreigners go home!" However, experience in former colonies indicates that a greater rather than a smaller number of foreigners find employment after these countries attained independence. Nevertheless, in Africa, the situation is complicated by the emotions excited by the colour-bar, the important White settlements in reserved areas and especially by the permanently worsening situation in South Africa. These are partly political issues, with which this book is not concerned. But from the cultural view point, the situation of Asians in East Africa deserves a special kind of consideration.

As already mentioned, the bulk of the present Asians came when the British began, in 1901, to build a railway from Mombasa to Lake Victoria, and to colonize Kenya. From humble beginnings as indented labourers, petty traders, contractors, clerks and subordinate officials, a now economically powerful Asian group has grown. Its importance should not be under-estimated, but its peculiar position should also be fully understood. At present it is

a solidly entrenched middle-class and it is likely to be a long time before Africans are able to take over the handling of big finance, the conduct of trade and the performance of technical tasks which are now almost an Asian monopoly. Yet the time for the African middle-classes is bound to come. Generally East Africa Indians are primarily businessmen, interested in money, not idealists planning for a new way of life. Their past attitude has often stressed the barriers between their own traditions and those of the pre-literate, tribal Africans. Moreover, a class of small traders in a predominantly agricultural or proletarian population not infrequently stirs up adverse feelings, especially when the trade is linked with the advancing of goods against interests. It is a situation which does not hold out significant promise of happy solutions to knotty problems, but there are also other, and brighter, sides to the picture.

The desire for culture as such, and for cultural ties with their mother countries, has arisen among the second and third generation of Asians proportionally as they have grown more prosperous. The improved transport of our time makes regular home leave available for a sizable minority of Asians in East Africa which, if still small, is not without influence on the entire community. This is not to say that these casual contacts should be overrated. True, such home leave is mostly dedicated to family and business, instead of to *ashrams* or other sources of traditional inspiration. It is likewise true that many African Asians feel that their own higher living standards in Africa are proof enough that the mother country has nothing to give them that they do not already have. However, the culturally most receptive among them realize more and more the danger of losing their own cultural roots without which they have no chance of taking part in the African synthesis which is the need of to-morrow.

The African Synthesis. This is the core of the problem.

Africa has been flooded by, and dumped with, foreign things and ideas, in an unprecedented manner. The arsenal of acculturation that it now forms is, without synthesis, bound to turn into chaos. The synthesis is on the way, but it must be all comprising and the process of adjustment must be mutual.

The attempt to eradicate from the Africa of to-morrow the techno-

logy of to-day, on the ground that it had come from abroad yesterday, would be as unrealistic as an attempt to remove from western music all the elements and indirect influences which the African genius has contributed to it especially during the past half century. In this connection it may be useful to appreciate what contemporary Westerners feel, for there are significant changes of orientation taking place at the higher level, even in some religiously dogmatic groups. For example, on April 19, 1959, a Frenchman, M. de Bourbon-Busset, giving for the *Cercle Saint-Jean-Baptiste* in Paris a lecture about the role of culture in the world of to-morrow aptly pointed out how modern technology permits most diversified cultures to know each other thoroughly and to co-exist, but he also pointed out how technical progress strengthens the strong and weakens the weak and that there is a great need for cultural synchronization in order to counter-act the perpetually growing dangers of destruction through excessive mechanization. He expressed his conviction that there are intrinsic values in cultures foreign to the West and that they possess treasures which are useful to the whole of mankind. He pointed especially to Africa, south of the Sahara (*l'Afrique Noire—Black Africa*) which "has been ignored... whilst her contributions could be particularly valuable in our epoch, characterized, by the tendency to lose the contact with nature and with the sense of the sacred." He pronounced his belief in an "inner alchemy" of cultural world developments, based on "the freedom of the spirit." Even though his conviction that this freedom can be "defended and developed" by Christianity best, and "propagated" by the Roman Catholic Church alone, may perhaps not be shared in other circles, it is yet significant that some among the religiously dogmatic acknowledge now the necessity to speak to all without distinction of "environment or race and even without that of different cultures." (Parias, 1959:2)

The change evident in this will be of equal interest to Africans and to Asians in Africa. Both are still in a position which is culturally dominated by European systems of thought and by a European system of education. European intellectuals recognize their failure in coping at home with the new technology of our world civilization. Some at least turn in earnest to other cultures, in the hope of finding solutions by blending values.

What will be the role of India's cultural capital, of Indian traditional values, in the blending of systems which is bound to come

about with the creation of a genuinely African pattern of life?

The very sources from which Indian cultures have grown and by which they are nourished are akin to the stream of life which the African genius pours forth.

The love of nature, expressed in worship under the sanctified roofs of living trees, the presence of the sacred, expressed in every boy's and girl's character-building through initiation rituals, or the mystique of rhythm and sound—all these are more than merely co-incidental similarities in the essence of African and Asian cultures. African ritualistic dancing and music, for instance, have much in common with the art traditions of India.

These are affinities of expression. African forms of dress are, in principle, free from the meticulous *taboo* on semi-nudity, and in this resemble the traditional Indian style far more than their European counterpart which, also, has in the meantime superseded both African and Indian styles, inspite of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave demonstrated the possibility to apply traditional styles to modern circumstances. Solutions of this kind could go a long way to solve in the future a few thorny problems in Africa, to which reference has been made in some chapters of this book and elsewhere (Ehrenfels, 1959/b, c.).

A true revival of African music and dancing, on the lines achieved in South India under Rukmini Devi's inspiration, is a *desideratum* long overdue. African sculpture and wood carving are admired by connoisseurs in London, Paris and New York, but in Africa itself contemporary artists are still led to copy European art styles and to produce crucifixes, holy virgins and saints with Caucasoid features, instead of African heroes and heroines in African styles.

In this context it may seem ironical that the old Indo-Asian *ashram* idea, instead of being introduced into African life by Asians, was first put into operation there, by Europeans in their small mission stations at out-of-the-way places of *the porini*. . .

I am not aware that any attempts have been made to send from Asia, Hindu or even Buddhist religious ambassadors to Africa, who may present the inner core of their religions and demonstrate the Indian approach to problems of life, an approach which has so much in common with the African sense of the sacred *within* the

profane—instead of alongside it, as in Europe.

Traditional African culture is in this respect nearer to the Indian attitude, the Indian warmth of permeation through introspection, than to the more rationalistic approach of reasoning on the basis of experimental action which we find even among the definitely religious-minded Westerners. The Muslims from South Asia have similarly failed to grasp the great and unique opportunity which the spread of Islam offered them on arrival through local or more westerly Arabs. In fact, an attitude of exclusiveness developed among the Asian Muslims of East Africa under the stress of their own almost caste-like and sectarian peculiarism combined with the effects of European supremacy. Far-sighted Muslim leaders, like the late Aga Khan, perceived no doubt the grave dangers which such trends are bound to spell for a numerically small, though affluent and influential, trading community of Muslims from South Asia. He supported Muslim educational and charitable institutions with generous donations, pound per pound, if they worked for Africans, so that they might provide the platform for a common Afro-Asian Islamic Culture.

The movements towards an inter-continental African synthesis is clearly marked in this as in numerous other attitudes and actions, though it does not always proceed without certain quite puzzling inconsistencies, as when, to give a single example, Ismaili ladies in East Africa take to European clothing, abandoning their *saris* as also their *pyjamas* and *kurtas*, for a kind of tailored costume which is supposed to give symbolical help to integration into the new homeland—Africa where the use of sewn garments in European style is an innovation more recent even than it is in India.

However, such anomalies need not cause undue concern for the future. True, nobody can give what he himself does not have, and Indians and Pakistanis have themselves become too paralysed, culturally, by the fear of the body and the fear of the self to find solutions which could serve as patterns for solving the problems of Africans. But it is not advice, not another kind of missionary activity, imposing, or trampling on, local values, which is now wanted in Africa. It is a synthesis which can only be found on the path to one's own cultural identity.

If it is true that this quest has not yet found its aim in India, it is also true that, historically seen, it was a great Indian who set out

on this searching path and achieved freedom for his country,—the first among a great number of other European-dominated and now independent lands.

After disembarkation in India, my land of adoption, and before proceeding to Madras to resume the teaching of Anthropology to young men and women in this great old country, I had a few days' rest in Bombay, in what is to me the idyllic solitude of *Raj Bhavan* on the edge of the city's famous bay and the Arabian Sea.

Every afternoon, when the cool sea breeze lured me away from my desk, my notes, and my negatives—on to the verandah or to the edge of the garden, I looked over the rolling waves into the vast emptiness of transparent light in the west, just as, a few days before, I had gazed towards the Horn of Africa and Cape Guardafui, till Socotra had marked for me the end of a year's life and work in Africa.

So from India too, I looked towards the west, as though in longing for a future to come—I who all my life had turned to the east.

How and why this lure of the west had overtaken me I cannot quite say.

It was not the west in relation to the place, or country where I had been born, nor was it the west of politics. It was also not the west of a day's end, that of sunset before the coming of night.

But it was the enfoldment of an indescribable brilliance, a sparkling effulgence, where the sun dipped into living, moving gold. And gold kindled on the white crests of the waves, moving incessantly over the fathomless, dark blue depths below.

There the African continent lies—The LIGHT CONTINENT for me. The continent of the *twiga*, the giraffe with silent, questioning eyes. It has passed through dark days. Days of fear and days of humiliation. But even these have not changed its inner nature—wide, open light. Africa cannot forget her own nature. Africa will add a new ray of light to the old, dark Story of Man that has crept over this planet.

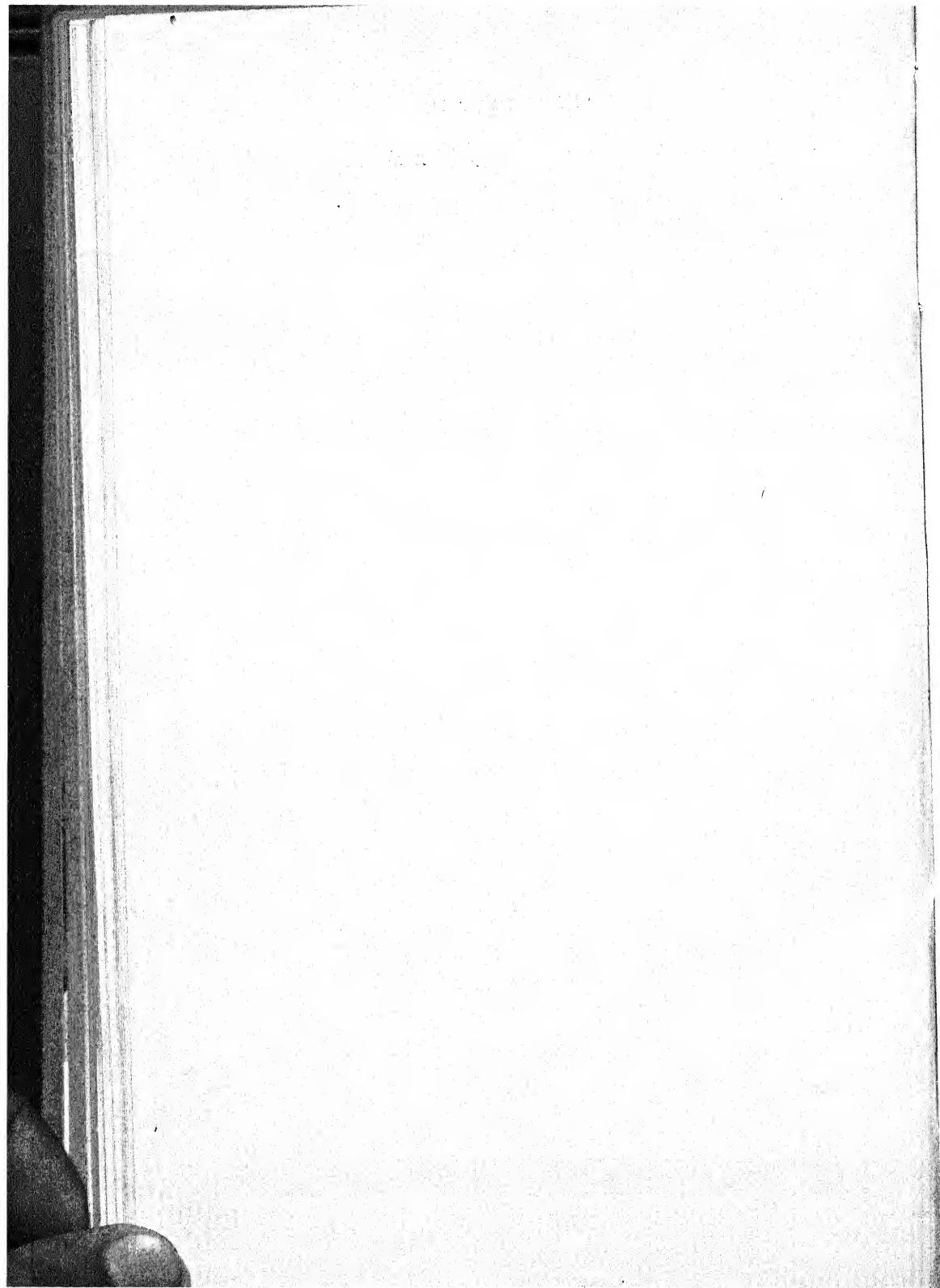
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